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The Week

ALTHOUGH Mussolini has spoken a little more softly during the past few days, his quarrel with Ethiopia (if determination to commit burglary can be called a quarrel) still remains as far from a peaceful solution as ever. The League's Committee of Five proposed a plan that would have seemed outrageous if Italy's still more outrageous demands were not in the air. Under the Committee's scheme, the League would "aid" Ethiopia in reorganizing the police force and in enforcing the laws, particularly those for the protection of foreigners and those against slavery. The country would employ four foreign advisers under the direction of a specially appointed League commissioner. Great Britain and France would recognize "Italy's special interest in the economic development" of the country. This plan was accepted by Ethiopia in the same spirit in which dwellers on the prairie used to set a small fire to head off a bigger one. It was rejected by Mussolini, although not quite in so blustering a tone as that of ten days ago.

THE Italian counter-proposal, it is understood, was the cession of roughly the eastern third of Ethiopia, plus the right to build two railways to Addis Ababa, one from Eritrea and one from Italian Somaliland, each of these to run through a strip of Italian territory from thirty to sixty miles wide. The Ethiopian army would be disarmed and all troops in future would have Italian officers. Italy further wants sweeping economic concessions, and in particular, demands that Ethiopia's access to the sea must be through an Italian port. Needless to say, this would give Italy a complete monopoly of Ethiopian foreign trade. The Committee of Five found these terms unacceptable, and as we go to press, negotiations have dropped back to the hotel-bedroom stage. Here, Mussolini's great advantage is that his opponents are not united. France is bound, or pretends she is, by Laval's mysterious oral promise to Mussolini. She will aid Great Britain only if the latter country will give her an iron-clad pledge of assistance in case of an attack by Germany. This the British are reluctant to give, since their recent policy has been based upon at least a degree of rapprochement with Hitler. The whole question is thus reduced to a matter of horse trading. How small a price can Britain pay for French assistance against Italy? And how small a part of Ethiopia can Mussolini be compelled to accept under the threat of economic sanctions to be applied by the League?

IN ALL three countries, domestic complications make the government's task more difficult. In England, the Labor Party and most of public opinion in general are far more belligerent than the present Tory government, demanding sanctions against Italy even if these sanctions mean war. In France, the government is in a precarious position. Strong Left elements take the same view as the British Labor Party In Italy, Mussolini has started a war conflagration that he cannot quench overnight. No matter what bargain may be struck, he will have to kill a few Ethiopians to sate the blood lust he has

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created. The tension between Italy and Great Britain due to the concentration of ships and airplanes of both powers at strategic points in the Mediterranean, however, has been allayed slightly in the past few days. Britain has solemnly explained that she was frightened by the hostile tone of the Rome press. Italy has solemnly explained that she was frightened by the hostile tone of the London press. Both countries have made these explanations with perfectly straight faces.

MOST of the other foreign news of the week is of a gloomy character. Germany's long standing dispute with Lithuania over Memel seems likely to burst into flame almost at any minute. There is bad blood between Poland and Russia, recently augmented when Colonel Josef Beck took offense at Litvinov's criticism of the German-Polish non-aggression treaty and when a Polish contestant in the Bennett balloon race charged that he was fired upon by Russian troops. From Moscow come reports of a new danger from Japan, which is said to be planning to send war vessels into Siberian coastal waters against the strong objection of the Soviet authorities. War is again a possibility in the Gran Chaco, as the peace conference remains deadlocked. Bolivia demands that Paraguay release 30,000 war prisoners before the peace treaty is signed; Paraguay would like these events to take place in reverse order.

IN THE Philippines, Manuel Quezon has been elected first President of the Commonwealth as the Archipelago suffers from a rice shortage and General Douglas MacArthur, late chief of staff of the United States Army, is appointed to develop the new government's military defenses. France, still clinging to her "cross of gold," has made a feeble attempt to encourage stabilization in Great Britain and the United States, by offering special trade inducements—an offer which, it is safe to say, will be ignored. From Canada come reports that the Social Credit philosophy of Alberta is now epidemic in the other Western provinces and may upset all prophecies regarding the outcome of the national election on October 14.

THE decision in regard to W. P. A. wages was the most important domestic development of the past week. Yielding to heavy pressure from the American Federation of Labor, the Roosevelt administration has retreated from its previous insistence that relief workers under the new program shall work a full week at an average rate of about $50 a month and a maximum of $93. Labor leaders pointed out that this meant hourly rates far below the going wages in many industries, and would inevitably tend to break down union scales in private employment, built up painfully over a generation. While the total monthly wage remains the same, Mr. Hopkins' subordinates are now authorized to reduce the working week so that in certain cases, at least, the hourly rates will approximate current union standards.

THOUGH the administration is to be commended for having the courage to admit a mistake, its new policy goes only about one-quarter of the way toward a wise national plan. That plan would give home relief in adequate amounts to everyone in need. It would include a program of public works of permanent value, as large as the national resources would permit, to be produced by the government or private contractors, paying full standard wages in either case and employing only those persons—whether previously jobless or not—qualified to participate in the work in question. Such a program, put through at top speed, would fulfill the Keynes theory of "priming the pump" and increase consumer purchasing power to an appreciable degree. The present policy of trying to create "busy work" for everyone is about as socially intelligent as the practice in our grandmothers' day when little girls made samplers, just as discipline, and then took them apart again. We shall presently have spent about seven billion dollars with singularly little to show for it; and Democratic orators in next year's campaign are certain to have a hard time explaining and justifying such expenditures to the country.

THE threatened strike of 400,000 soft-coal miners was another important development of the week. At this writing, it is hoped that a successful settlement of the strike will soon be reached. As President Roosevelt prepared for his four-weeks trip to the Pacific Coast, the first activity of the 1936 campaign, government attorneys were bending every effort to bring before the Supreme Court the remaining cornerstones of the New Deal—the A.A.A., the T.V.A., the Guffey Law for coal and the National Labor Disputes Act. This is a startling reversal of former administration policy, interpreted in Washington as meaning that if the Court continues to follow the lines laid down in the Schechter decision, Mr. Roosevelt is prepared to make his campaign for reëlection on a constitutional amendment specifically authorizing the federal government to control wages, hours and conditions of labor. The new Munitions Control Board has held its first meeting, preparatory to licensing munitions makers, while the President has wrestled with the problem of whether to include on the embargo list raw materials useful in war, such as cotton, copper, chemicals and steel. The A.A.A. has dropped its hot potato by announcing that lack of funds makes impossible the new scheme for compulsory restriction on the production and sale of the forthcoming potato crop.

IN Pennsylvania and New Jersey, important state elections have been held. In Pennsylvania the voters rejected plans for a new state Constitution which would have followed the lines of the New Deal;

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Pennsylvania Democrats explained they were defeated by a sudden last-minute expenditure of vast sums by the Republicans to broadcast the false charge that the plan would have meant saddling the state with a dictatorship. In New Jersey, candidates for state offices who opposed the state sales tax defeated its supporters, the state's business men having discovered that the tax was driving away trade. In New York City, the Consolidated Gas interests, after having loudly announced that they had no fear of the proposal for a municipal "yardstick" electric-power plant, suddenly changed their tune and sought by court action to prevent the November referendum on this subject. As Constitution Day brought the customary flood of Republican oratory demanding in effect that property rights continue to be held superior to human rights, the American Liberty League, now entirely a mouthpiece for Tory Republicanism, solemnly brought forward an opinion by nearly sixty conservative lawyers that the National Labor Disputes Act is unconstitutional. President Roosevelt has announced that private charity must begin to carry a larger share of the burden of relief—in other words, that its proportion of the total task must rise from its present level of three or four percent toward its pre-depression maximum of twenty-five or thirty. In San Francisco, the rehearing of the Mooney case started off unpropitiously with the state parading in public Mooney's radical beliefs, as though what Mooney believes had anything in the world to do with the question of whether he received a fair trial in 1916.

THOSE who report on fascism in the movies tend to overdo it, frequently calling up a picture of some group of big bankers sitting around behind closed doors and turning out film scripts by the crate. But it would surely be overdoing it in the other direction to say of "Red Salute," opening shortly in New York City, that its jingoism is merely misplaced fervor, its anti-labor elements purely the spontaneous expression of small and dim and muddy minds. Produced by Reliance Pictures for release through United Artists, this film is unmistakably a made-to-order attack on radicalism in the colleges. It opens on the American flag, floating over a quite phony demonstration on some campus, and it reaches an emotional climax when an American soldier of the cleanest cut bares to the multitudes his forearm, prominently tattooed with Old Glory in full color. In between, there are at least three places where someone wishes they'd start another war, hasn't had any fun since the last one. There is talk about Reds, aliens, loyalty, the minds of our youth and what not. There is evidence that the chief student agitator is a paid propagandist, not to say a sybarite and nasty fellow. There are shots of thirty-year-old college boys with tough black mugs, and shots of silly intellectuals, hungry looking, pimply, behind glasses. And the dialogue throughout suggests nothing so much as the triumph and angry clucking of five bridge-tables of D.A.R. delegates, reading antiphonally or in unison the week's crop of scareheads from their respective local branches of the Hearst press.

AS TO story, the film is about so-so, being in its major portion a rather dim copy of the "It Happened One Night" formula (the soldier having stolen a military car for her sake, tries to dissuade the spoiled rich girl from getting back to Washington for her fiancé's May Day address—spats, sudden tenderness, car wrecks, escapes, humor, etc.). And while this story is not enough in itself to put the film over with large audiences, the dangerous elements of any such business should not be minimized. Whoever is ripe to be fooled will be fooled to the hilt when it becomes a question of wrapping frauds up in celluloid, because of the immanence, vividness and persuasive tangibility of the American picture as a form. The one happy element about this film is that it is too palpable and jerrybuilt to carry conviction with a considerable part of the present movie audience. It will be boycotted in some places; and exhibitors, who are business men and don't want trouble on one side of the line or the other, will find it both too weak and too hot to handle with the highest profit. "Red Salute" seems strangely out of place for this time: it belongs with the special gullibility of some more frenzied period, such as that of a war. For the present, the most effective propaganda for the status quo is made by those who are too naïve or sluggish to be conscious of it as such.

NEBRASKA authorities have jailed the seventy-three-year-old Ella Reeve Bloor—"Mother" Bloor, who has been active in labor struggles in the Midwest for the past forty years—on charges of "inciting riot" and "unlawful assembly." Her offense was to speak on behalf of girl workers who were striking for living wages and decent working conditions in a large Nebraska creamery, coupled with her participation in a mass meeting called to elect a farm-woman delegate to a regional conference against war and fascism. Each of these meetings was invaded by self-appointed vigilantes, and in the resulting disturbance Mother Bloor and three companions were arrested. The four were sentenced to thirty days in jail and fined $100 each, to be worked out, if not paid, at the rate of one dollar per day in jail. Eleven days of the jail sentences were served at the time of the arrest in June, 1934. Subsequent appeals to the Supreme Court of Nebraska were unavailing, and Mother Bloor and her companions are now serving out the remaining nineteen days. Meanwhile, lawyers employed by the National Committee for the Defense of Political Prisoners are working for a pardon and the Committee is making efforts to raise a fund to pay the fines so that Mother Bloor and her fellow workers will not have to serve an extra hundred days in jail.

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TWO persons were killed and thirty injured in Minneapolis recently when police laid down a tear-gas barrage and then fired into a picket line of strikers surrounding the plant of the Flour City Ornamental Iron Works. This would be shocking news from any American city, and it is all the more to be deplored since it comes from a city that last year elected a Farmer-Labor administration on the specific pledge that police power and police weapons would not be used against peaceful picketers. In the atmosphere of tense and bitter recrimination that has followed this shooting, it is difficult to assess responsibility. Mayor Thomas E. Latimer has been charged by some observers with forsaking his platform pledges and betraying the principles held by the rank and file of his party members, others have charged that the whole party program is inadequate to safeguard labor in any such situation, and still others, of course, have applauded the "firm, decisive action" against "subversive elements." Meanwhile two persons are dead—one of them a Sunday-school teacher returning from a church social, and the other a casual passer-by—and no amount of arguing can restore the lives blotted out by police bullets fired at defenseless American citizens.

A STUDY of textbooks in common use in American public schools to determine what kind of material they contain relative to the Negro has just been completed by the Conference on Education and Race Relations, an organization of one hundred Southern educators, with headquarters in Atlanta. Twenty standard textbooks in history were examined and it was found that seventeen of them leave the student in complete ignorance that Negroes ever rendered the slightest service to the flag of their country. Eighteen of the twenty histories made no mention whatever of the Negro's progress since emancipation, and there was a general failure to assess fairly the relative responsibility of the confused freedmen and their white leaders for the mistakes and crimes of the Reconstruction era. Fourteen of the principal textbooks in civics were studied, and exactly one-half of them made no reference to the Negro or to the problems incident to his presence in this country. Three treated the subject so lightly as to leave scarcely any impression, three brief treatments tended to deepen existing prejudices, and only one made any real attempt at adequacy and fairness. Thirty-eight textbooks in literature were read, and twenty-five of these contained no suggestion that the Negro has ever made the least contribution to the literature of America. Eight books mentioned briefly only a single writer (either Phillis Wheatley or Paul Laurence Dunbar); one named both; and only four mentioned as many as three or more Negro writers. In view of these findings of "omissions and inclusions that make for misunderstanding," the Conference seems justified in calling for a considerable revision of American textbooks.

Why Europe May Fight

IT IS possible that no general European war will come from the Ethiopian crisis. There are, however, terrifying indications that forces have been set in motion that will bring war within a relatively short time, perhaps within two or three years.

One thing about this prospect needs to be reiterated. There cannot be more than five hundred Europeans, at most, who have any authentic knowledge of the issues at stake, or will know, when the fighting begins, what it is about. The common people in London are being told that the home fleet has been sent into the Mediterranean to defend little Ethiopia and international justice as embodied in the League. This is fake, and most Englishmen feel that it is fake. So the more sophisticated journals have begun to talk of the need to defend the lifeline of the empire, which passes through the Mediterranean. This is equally fake. A few years ago, indeed, England tried to strengthen the Italian position in East Africa by ceding to it Jubaland.

It is important that the explanations and apologies of European governments in this crisis should not be received uncritically. The capitalist, nationalist, militarist system under which the 550,000,000 inhabitants of Europe are living would be unworkable by a community of archangels. If the Europeans themselves and the rest of the world are to have any peace and comfort in the future, Europe must be radically rebuilt. People must not get the notion that Europe's difficulties are due to the wickedness of one nation or another, or to the double-dealing of individual statesmen. There has been no time since the Paris peace negotiations in 1919 when it was so necessary that the truth be known.

Yet it must be realized that we cannot have the truth itself. The essence of the present European situation is that even the insiders—Sir Samuel Hoare, M. Laval and Mussolini—do not know what is happening outside their own Foreign Offices, or what to believe of the information that their espionage services bring them. They are blind men groping their way along a precipice. We, as outsiders, must equally depend on guesswork.

There are numbers of misconceptions, fostered by the newspapers, that need to be cleared away before we can even guess intelligently. The first is that the present conflict lies between Mussolini and England. Mussolini's part in the crisis is by no means decisive. If a temporary settlement is reached, it will be reached primarily by England, France, Germany and Russia, the four great European powers. But there is not one of the twenty-six European nations that is not immersed in the present negotiations, bedeviling each step taken.

It is a mistake, also, to think that European countries have definite ambitions and goals as individuals have. The newspapers say: "England will fight Italy." But the fact is that a third of the

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Tory Party is pro-Italian. An anonymous Cabinet Minister is reported to have pointed out that, if Mussolini is defeated, Italy will go communist, and to have said that "I would rather lose the road to India than see Italy red." Laval is so far from representing France that it is doubtful if he can hold office for another six weeks. Even in Italy, Mussolini must have occasional worries over the possibility of a *coup d'état* by Marshal Italo Balbo and his Libyan army. To visualize the present crisis, you must picture Europe filled from border to border with little groups of quarreling, suspicious men, uncertain of what they want and what their next step should be.

The only moderately safe way to approach the European situation is to shut your ears to everything being said by governments and newspapers, and to look at the actual events that preceded Mussolini's dispatch of troops to East Africa. There have been but two great European developments in the last few years. One was the completion of the Five Year Plan in Russia, and the growth of the Red Army. The other was the advent of Hitler, and the consequent rearming of Germany. There is no doubt that the German rearmament brought great alarm to France. But the reason for this alarm is less clear. Hitler repeatedly assured the French that the new German military machine would never be directed toward France, and in this instance there are various reasons for trusting in his sincerity. We know, however, that French capital has large interests in eastern Europe—in the Polish textile industry and, through Skoda, in munitions and steel in the Balkans. A more powerful Nazi state would undeniably aid German capital in competing with French capital. But we likewise know that French and German industrialists have private arrangements among themselves. We can guess that Hitler's rearmament has disadvantaged one international group of financiers in relation to another group, but precisely who these individuals are, and the extent to which they have been affected, remains unknowable.

The first result in Paris of Hitler's rearming was confusing—the same sort of fumbling with international high explosives that we now see going on about Ethiopia. Then the late Marshal Pilsudski, failing to obtain satisfactory pledges from France, came to an understanding with Germany. The nature of this understanding we do not know, but we may guess that it was a military alliance. Thereupon France acted. It concluded a military alliance of its own with Russia, and, last January, M. Laval went to Rome to make peace with Mussolini. Again we do not know what happened, but Mussolini's bravado toward England is inexplicable except on the basis of a secret, binding agreement with France. Thus, as a result of an undisclosed threat to undefined French interests in eastern Europe, a whole network of alliances sprang up that included, besides France, Russia and Italy, half a dozen smaller countries.

Hitler's armaments did not alarm London as they did Paris. The glib explanation is that England wishes to hold the balance of power on the Continent, and welcomes a Germany approximately equal to France. Probably a better reason is the banking connections between London and Frankfort and Berlin, which still exist in spite of Dr. Schacht. There are also great international industries, like chemicals, that exert political influence in both countries. Moreover, there is undoubtedly a feeling among the English upper class that, if it must choose between Hitler and Stalin, its long-range interests demand friendliness toward Hitler. For many months, England refused to join the anti-German front. It was roused to action only when, last fall, it seemed possible that France, Italy and the Little Entente would start a "preventive" war to defeat Germany before General Göring's airplanes were completed. Last April, England attended the Stresa conference, and joined France and Italy in forbidding Germany to seize Austria, while simultaneously assuring Germany that the Austrian question might be raised later on. Then, in June, England made a naval agreement with Germany, important details of which it promised to keep secret from France.

About this time, Mussolini's plans for conquering Ethiopia first became known. In the anarchic welter of European relationships, it will be observed, there were no stable factors. France distrusted Germany and England. England distrusted France, and had acute doubts concerning Hitler. Germany distrusted all other countries. No capitalist nation, including France, trusted Russia, nor did Russia trust them.

It is impossible to believe that England feared Mussolini's plans in East Africa for their own sake. Lately a number of military experts have been speculating on the length of time it would take England to defeat Mussolini, assuming that Italy had no allies, and the most generous estimate is ninety days. The only reasonable explanation is that England was irritated, rather than alarmed, by the suspicion of a secret military understanding between Mussolini and Laval. Just what injury such an understanding would do to Britain's material interests in the Mediterranean is not apparent, but certainly it lessened the dependence of both Italy and France on England, and thus lowered British prestige. Captain Eden went to Rome and offered Mussolini a slice of Ethiopia, provided that he would accept it as bounty from England and not from France. Mussolini, for a still unexplained reason, not only refused, but seems to have talked wildly about attacking Egypt.

Since then, England has been attempting to force Laval to repudiate his compact with Mussolini—whatever it was—and to permit the latter's humiliation. For days Laval bent and twisted like a contortionist, but apparently England has now prevailed. It is important to note, however, that the significant effects of the revived English and French collaboration will be not in the Mediterranean, but in Berlin.

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Did Laval surrender unconditionally to the British, and will this mean Hitler can now seize Memel, and force the holding of a plebiscite on Anschluss in Austria? Or did Laval succeed in obtaining a British pledge against further Nazi expansion? If Hitler believes that he now is faced by a rigid Anglo-French bloc, will he admit defeat or will he start on some desperate adventure? Again Mussolini's diplomatic, financial and probable military troubles mean a complete rearrangement of the relations of the Balkan countries. Finally, no change can occur in Hitler's foreign policies without reciprocal changes in the policies of Russia. And if Hitler moves in the Baltic region, will Japan move in Outer Mongolia?

What clear aim, what substantial national interests can be detected in this recital? Haile Selassie and his Amharic nobles wish to continue to exploit the Ethiopian peasant farmers unmolested by white men. That is simple, selfish and understandable. No other nation's motives have the merit of being even intelligently self-seeking. Whatever happens, the sole certain result will be a new series of secret alliances and a new massing of military, financial and commercial interests around the changed international status. Then will follow new threats and naval displays, new appeals to international justice, new negotiations, for the most part capricious and aimless. At some point, in Mussolini's phrase, "guns will go off by themselves," and there will be war.

Neutrality or Shadow-Boxing?

AS EUROPE drifts towards war, the question of American policy becomes steadily more urgent. There is no doubt that an overwhelming majority of the American people would like to stay out of the next war if they possibly can. This sentiment prevailed in the last session of Congress and was responsible for the enactment of the neutrality resolution during its closing hours. The question now remains: just what does the resolution mean? How will it be interpreted by the administration? Is it likely to serve the purpose that Congress and public opinion hoped?

The neutrality resolution is as muddled and vague as any other law in the mass of ill digested, hasty legislation passed during those hectic few days just before Congress adjourned. The more one studies it, the more numerous are the loopholes it is seen to contain. Although the intent of Congress was obviously to give the President as little discretion as possible, it is now evident that he receives a great deal. For example, he can choose his own time for declaring an embargo on war materials, doing so before the formal declaration of war, or at the same time, or subsequently. If certain nations go to war, and are subjected to embargo, and certain other nations afterward join the fray, the President apparently has wide discretion in the matter of extending the embargo to these other countries. This fact is the more striking because the whole dispute on this subject between the President and the Senate, a dispute that had lasted for months, turned on the point of whether the President might embargo certain countries that he deemed guilty of aggression, while selling materials to others that he considered innocent victims. The Senate, in our opinion wisely, believed that to give the President authority to discriminate in this way would be an infallible method of getting the United States into war. Now, however, it has helped to pass a law which to a large degree can be used in just this way.

But far more important is the question as to what constitutes arms, ammunition and instruments of war, which must not be sold to belligerents. It is obvious that guns, shells, tanks and armored cars are within the meaning of the resolution. But what about unarmored trucks, buses and passenger cars, which are of tremendous value in wartime? What about semi-manufactured machine products, which by the addition of one or two processes can be turned into implements of war? And more particularly, what about raw materials for shells and guns—cotton, copper, steel and chemicals?

The new Munitions Control Board, which held its first meeting last Tuesday, has begun by requiring American manufacturers, importers and exporters of actual munitions to register and take out licenses, with December 1 as the deadline. This does not mean, however, that additional articles or products may not subsequently be added to the list. Government experts on this subject are preparing a tentative list of the things supposedly covered by the neutrality resolution, for the use of the Munitions Control Board. This board in turn will make its recommendations to Mr. Roosevelt, who will disregard them if he sees fit, and substitute a list of his own. Washington correspondents report that the President is now trying to make up his mind what articles should be put under embargo if Italy and Ethiopia go to war; and it is suggested that he is watching public opinion on this subject.

The New Republic does not presume to speak for public opinion as a whole; but we do know that an embargo confined to finished munitions will not serve the purpose Congress had in mind, that of keeping us out of war. Unless semi-manufactured products and raw materials are included, our economic interest in the success of one belligerent or the other will presently become overwhelming, as was the case in 1916. We have repeatedly pointed out in these pages that maintenance of neutrality in any large-scale war is almost impossible in any case. It will be entirely so if we create a vast trade with any country at war and are then confronted by the fact that to cut off that trade would be a minor, possibly a major, disaster to our economic life.

We are already drifting into this situation as regards Italy. American plants manufacturing implements that are of military use, directly or indirectly, are working overtime, and while as little as pos-

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sible is said about this traffic, it is obvious that supplies are going, by one route or another, to Il Duce. This business cannot very long continue on a cash basis; ways will be found to circumvent the Johnson law and advance American credit, at stiff interest rates, to the Italian government. Then we shall see again what we saw before April, 1917: a complex group of forces powerfully interested, if not in getting us directly into the war, at least in causing us to continue a course of conduct absolutely unneutral in its effects and involving the greatest possible danger.

Already whispers are going around the country that the war will solve the problem of our cotton surplus, will bring the steel industry back to life, will serve as a substitute for the A.A.A. if the Supreme Court should "Schechter the law," to use Secretary Wallace's vivid phrase. If President Roosevelt really wishes to preserve peace, he must not listen to these whispers. He must cut off all trade with the belligerents that is useful, directly or indirectly, in the prosecution of a war. Such a course will raise howls of protest; it will be difficult, dangerous and expensive. But it will be a thousand times less difficult, dangerous and expensive than going to war.

Liberty League Lawyers

IN THE annals of the American Bar, the activities of the American Liberty League's "distinguished" lawyers will rank as a curious incident. Ostensibly, in making a solemn pronouncement that the Wagner Labor Disputes Act is unconstitutional, they are rallying to the defense of a Constitution which the Supreme Court of the United States is amply able to protect. That is perhaps no more than presumptuous. Actually they are lending themselves to propaganda on behalf of their clients, both individually and as a class. That is not far above the level of criminal lawyers who try their cases in the newspapers. One of the distinguished authorities on the Constitution is counsel for the United States Steel Corporation, whose labor policy is well known. Could he keep his retainer if he announced that in his opinion the Supreme Court should uphold the Wagner Act? Can it be expected that counsel for public utilities or for clients with heavy stock interests will maintain publicly that restricting statutes are constitutional? That such lawyers pose as disinterested authorities on constitutional law and give their opinions to the newspapers is something to think about.

But apart from individuals and their employers, it is clear from the League's explanatory statement, that its lawyers, in French terminology, are expected to give *plaidoyers* and not *consultations*. They are, that is to say, expected to be advocates of unconstitutionality, for they will contribute their "services in test cases involving fundamental constitutional questions"—presumably only to private clients and not as dollar-a-year men in the Department of Justice. One is not surprised if a Congress of Bishops is somewhat intolerant of atheism. One need not be surprised if the Liberty League's lawyers are intolerant of New Deal legislation.

As a matter of fact, a symposium of opinions of lawyers—even of really leading constitutional lawyers—is not worth much time or effort. "The Court," Professor Corwin has declared, "as heir to the accumulated doctrines of its predecessors, now finds itself in possession of such a variety of instruments of constitutional exegesis that it is able to achieve almost any result in the field of constitutional interpretation which it considers desirable, and that without flagrant departure from judicial good form." Efforts to persuade the Court that it should or should not deem it "desirable" to uphold a statute are rather futile in advance of the argument of a particular case. It is the business of government counsel to try to choose the case they wish to have decided; to get it to the Court without a delay that indicates lack of confidence; to argue it properly, and, if the record of administration permits, to make the Court realize that an adverse decision on constitutionality will end government activity that has been approved by Congress and the President, is accepted by public opinion and adequately meets a need without doing harm. Unhappily few if any of these requirements were met in the presentation of the Schechter case.

The Liberty League's lawyers, therefore, should not be taken too seriously. While it is possible that they are right in this instance, some of them have been wrong in past prognostications. Mr. James M. Beck, for example, who is prominent in the list, declared that the Supreme Court's opinion in the Nebbia (New York milk) case "calmly discarded its decisions of fifty years and did not even pay these decisions the obsequious respect of a funeral oration." That was language as strong in its way as that used by President Roosevelt in discussing the Schechter decision. Circumstances alter cases, says an old saw. Cases, it might be added, alter lawyers' views.

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The American Plan: Its Rise and Fall

"Mr. Ford the automobileer," the feature writer wrote in 1900,

"Mr. Ford the automobileer began by giving his steed three or four sharp jerks with the lever at the right-hand side of the seat; that is, he pulled the lever up and down sharply in order, as he said, to mix air with gasoline and drive the charge into the exploding cylinder. . . . Mr. Ford slipped a small electric switchhandle and there followed a puff, puff. . . . The puffing of the machine assumed a higher key. She was flying along about eight miles an hour. The ruts in the road were deep, but the machine certainly went with a dreamlike smoothness. There was none of the bumping common even to a street car. . . . By this time the boulevard had been reached, and the automobileer, letting a lever fall a little, let her out. Whiz! She picked up speed with infinite rapidity. As she ran on there was a clattering behind, the new noise of the automobile."

FOR TWENTY years or more,

ever since he'd left his father's farm when he was sixteen to get a job in a Detroit machine shop, Henry Ford had been nuts about machinery. First it was watches, then he designed a steam tractor, then he built a horseless carriage with an engine adapted from the Otto gas engine he'd read about in The World of Science, then a mechanical buggy with a one-cylinder four-cycle motor, that would run forward but not back;

at last, in ninety-eight, he felt he was far enough along to risk throwing up his job with the Detroit Edison Company, where he'd worked his way up from night fireman to chief engineer, to put all his time into working on a new gasoline engine

(in the late eighties he'd met Edison at a meeting of electric-light employees in Atlantic City. He'd gone up to Edison after Edison had delivered an address and asked him if he thought gasoline was practical as a motor fuel. Edison had said yes. If Edison said it, it was true. Edison was the great admiration of Henry Ford's life . . .)

and in driving his mechanical buggy, sitting there at the lever jauntily dressed in a tight-buttoned jacket and a high collar and a derby hat, back and forth over the level ill paved streets of Detroit,

scaring the big brewery horses and the skinny trotting horses and the sleekrumped pacers with its loud explosions,

looking for men scatterbrained enough to invest money in a factory for building automobiles.

He was the eldest son of an Irish immigrant who during the Civil War had married the daughter of a prosperous Pennsylvania Dutch farmer and settled down to farming near Dearborn in Wayne County, Michigan;

like plenty of other Americans, young Henry grew up hating the endless sogging through the mud about the chores, the hauling and pitching manure, the kerosene lamps to clean, the irk and sweat and solitude of the farm.

He was a slender, active youngster, a good skater, clever with his hands; what he liked was to tend the machinery and let the others do the heavy work. His mother had told him not to drink, smoke, gamble or go into debt, and he never did.

When he was in his early twenties his father tried to get him back from Detroit, where he was working as mechanic and repairman for the Drydock Engine Company, which built engines for steamboats, by giving him forty acres of land.

Young Henry built himself an uptodate square white dwelling-house with a false mansard roof and married and settled down on the farm,

but he let the hired men do the farming;

he bought himself a buzzsaw and rented a stationary engine and cut the timber off the woodlots.

He was a thrifty young man who never drank or smoked or gambled or coveted his neighbor's wife, but he couldn't stand living on the farm.

He moved into Detroit, and in the brick barn behind his house tinkered for years in his spare time with a mechanical buggy that would be light enough to run over the clayey wagon roads of Wayne County, Michigan.

By 1900 he had a practicable car to promote.

He was forty years old before the Ford Motor Company was started and production began to move.

Speed was the first thing the early automobile manufacturers went after. Races advertised the makes of cars.

Henry Ford himself hung up several records at the track at Grosse Point and on the ice on Lake St. Clair. In his 999 he did the mile in thirty-nine and four-fifths seconds.

But it had always been his custom to hire others to do the heavy work. The speed he was busy with was speed in production, the records records in efficient output. He hired Barney Oldfield, a bicycle rider from Salt Lake City, to do the racing for him.

Henry Ford had ideas about other things than the designing of motors, carburetors, magnetos, jigs

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and fixtures, punches and dies; he had ideas about sales,

that the big money was in economical quantity production, quick turnover, cheap interchangeable easily replaced standardized parts;

it wasn't till 1909, after years of arguing with his partners, that Ford's put out the first Model T.

Henry Ford was right.

That season he sold more than ten thousand tin lizzies, ten years later he was selling almost a million a year.

In these years the Taylor Plan was stirring up plant managers and manufacturers all over the country. Efficiency was the word. The same ingenuity that went into improving the performance of a machine could go into improving the performance of the workmen producing the machine.

In 1913 they established the assembly line at Ford's. That season the profits were something like twenty-five million dollars, but they had trouble in keeping the men on the job, machinists didn't seem to like it at Ford's.

Henry Ford had ideas about other things than production.

He was the largest automobile manufacturer in the world; he paid high wages; maybe if the steady workers thought they were getting a cut (a very small cut) in the profits, it would give trained men an inducement to stick to their jobs,

well paid workers might save enough money to buy a tin lizzie; the first day Ford's announced that clean-cut, properly married American workers who wanted jobs had a chance to make five bucks a day (of course it turned out that there were strings to it; always there were strings to it)

such an enormous crowd waited outside the Highland Park plant

all through the zero January night

that there was a riot when the gates were opened; cops broke heads, jobhunters threw bricks; property, Henry Ford's own property, was destroyed. The company dicks had to turn the firehose on to beat back the crowd.

(That was the beginning of the American Plan, automotive prosperity seeping down from above; it turned out there were strings to it.)

But that five dollars a day

paid to good, clean American workmen

who didn't drink or smoke cigarettes or read or think,

and who didn't commit adultery

and whose wives didn't take in boarders

made America once more the Yukon of the sweated workers of the world;

made all the tin lizzies and the automotive age, and incidentally,

made Henry Ford the automobileer, the admirer of Edison, the birdlover,

the great American of his time.

But Henry Ford had ideas about other things besides assembly lines and the living habits of his employees. He was full of ideas. Instead of going to the city to make his fortune, here was a country boy who'd made his fortune by bringing the city out to the farm. The precepts he'd learned out of McGuffey's Reader, his mother's prejudices and preconceptions, he had preserved clean and unworn as fresh-printed bills in the safe in a bank.

He wanted people to know about his ideas, so he bought The Dearborn Independent and started a campaign against cigarette smoking.

When the War broke out in Europe, he had ideas about that too. (Suspicion of army men and soldiering were part of the Middlewestern farm tradition, like thrift, stickatitiveness, temperance and sharp practice in money matters.) Any intelligent American mechanic could see that if the Europeans hadn't been a lot of ignorant underpaid foreigners who drank, smoked, were loose about women and wasteful in their methods of production, the War could never have happened.

When Rosika Schwimmer broke through the stockade of secretaries and service men who surrounded Henry Ford and suggested to him that he could stop the War,

he said sure they'd hire a ship and go over and get the boys out of the trenches by Christmas.

He hired a steamboat, the "Oscar II," and filled it up with pacifists and social workers,

to go over to explain to the princelings of Europe

that what they were doing was vicious and silly.

It wasn't his fault that Poor Richard's common sense no longer rules the world and that most of the pacifists were nuts,

goofy with headlines.

When William Jennings Bryan went over to Hoboken to see him off, somebody handed William Jennings Bryan a squirrel in a cage; William Jennings Bryan made a speech with the squirrel under his arm. Henry Ford threw American Beauty roses to the crowd. The band played "I Didn't Raise My Boy to Be a Soldier." Practical jokers let loose more squirrels. An eloping couple was married by a platoon of ministers in the saloon, and Mr. Zero, the flophouse humanitarian, who reached the dock too late to sail,

dove into the North River and swam after the boat.

The "Oscar II" was described as a floating Chatauqua; Henry Ford said it felt like a Middlewestern village, but by the time they reached Christiansand in Norway, the reporters had kidded him so that he had gotten cold feet and gone to bed. The world was too crazy outside of Wayne County, Michigan. Mrs. Ford and the management sent an Episcopal dean after him who brought him home under wraps,

and the pacifists had to speechify without him.

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Two years later Ford's was manufacturing munitions, Eagle Boats; Henry Ford was planning one-man tanks, and one-man submarines like the one tried out in the Revolutionary War. He announced to the press that he'd turn over his war profits to the government,

but there's no record that he ever did.

One thing he brought back from his trip
was the Protocols of the Elders of Zion.

He started a campaign to enlighten the world in The Dearborn Independent: the Jews were why the world wasn't like Wayne County, Michigan, in the old horse and buggy days;

the Jews had started the War, Bolshevism, Darwinism, Marxism, Nietzsche, short skirts and lipstick. They were behind Wall Street and the international bankers, and the white-slave traffic and the movies and the Supreme Court and ragtime and the illegal liquor business.

Henry Ford denounced the Jews and ran for Senator and sued The Chicago Tribune for libel,

and was the laughing stock of the kept metropolitan press;

but when the metropolitan bankers tried to horn in on his business

he thoroughly outsmarted them.

In 1918 he had borrowed on notes to buy out his minority stockholders for the picayune sum of seventy-five million dollars.

In February, 1920, he needed cash to pay off some of these notes that were coming due. A banker is supposed to have called on him and offered him every facility if the bankers' representative could be made a member of the board of directors. Henry Ford handed the banker his hat,

and went about raising the money in his own way:

he shipped every car and part he had in his plant to his dealers and demanded immediate cash payment. Let the other fellow do the borrowing had always been a cardinal principle. He shut down production and canceled all orders from the supply firms. Many dealers were ruined, many supply firms failed, but when he reopened his plant,

he owned it absolutely,

the way a man owns an unmortgaged farm with the taxes paid up.

In 1922 there started the Ford boom for President (high wages, waterpower, industry scattered to the small towns) that was skillfully pricked behind the scenes

by another cracker-barrel philosopher,

Calvin Coolidge;

but in 1922 Henry Ford sold one million three hundred and thirty-two thousand, two hundred and nine tin lizzies; he was the richest man in the world.

Good roads had followed the narrow ruts made in the mud by the Model T. The great automotive boom was on. At Ford's production was improving all the time, there were less waste, more spotters, strawbosses, stoolpigeons (fifteen minutes for lunch, three minutes to go to the toilet, the Taylorized speedup everywhere, reach under, adjust washer, screw down bolt, shove in cotter pin, reachunder adjustwasher screwdown bolt, reachunderadjustscrewdownreachunderadjust until every ounce of life was sucked off into production and the workmen went home gray shaking husks).

Ford owned every detail of the process from the ore in the hills until the car rolled off the end of the assembly line under its own power, the plants were rationalized to the last ten-thousandth of an inch as measured by the Johannson scale;

in 1926 the production cycle was reduced to eighty-one hours from the ore in the mine to the finished salable car proceeding under its own power,

but the Model T was obsolete.

New Era prosperity and the American Plan,

(there were strings to it, always there were strings to it)

had killed Tin Lizzie.

Ford's was just one of many automobile plants.

When the stock-market bubble burst,

Mr. Ford the cracker-barrel philosopher said jubilantly,

"I told you so.

Serves you right for gambling and getting in debt.

The country is sound."

But when the country on cracked shoes, in frayed trousers, belts tightened over hollow bellies,

idle hands cracked and chapped with the cold of that coldest March day of 1932,

started marching from Detroit to Dearborn, asking for work and the American Plan, all they could think of at Ford's was machineguns.

The country was sound, but they mowed the marchers down.

They shot four of them dead.

Henry Ford as an old man

is a passionate antiquarian,

(lives besieged on his father's farm embedded in an estate of thousands of millionaire acres, protected by an army of servicemen, secretaries, secret agents, dicks under orders of an English ex-prize-fighter,

always afraid of the feet in broken shoes on the roads, that they'll kidnap his grandchildren,

that a crank will shoot him,

that Change and the idle hands out of work will break through the gates and the high fences;

protected by a private army against

the new America of starved children and hollow bellies and cracked shoes stamping on souplines,

that has swallowed up the old thrifty farmlands

of Wayne County, Michigan,

as if they had never been.)

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Henry Ford as an old man
is a passionate antiquarian.

He rebuilt his father's farmhouse and put it back exactly in the state he remembered it in as a boy. He built a village of museums for buggies, sleighs, coaches, old plows, waterwheels, obsolete models of motorcars. He scoured the country for fiddlers to play oldfashioned square dances.

Even old taverns he bought and put back into their original shape, as well as Thomas Edison's early laboratories.

When he bought the Wayside Inn near Sudbury, Massachusetts, he had the new highway, where the new-model cars roared and slithered and hissed oilily past *(the new noise of the automobile),*

moved away from the door,
put back the old bad road,
so that everything might be
the way it used to be,
in the days of horses and buggies.

JOHN DOS PASSOS.

New Orientations on the Left

Two meetings have recently taken place that are of great importance—the session of the Third International (Communist) in Moscow and that of the Executive Committee of the Second International (Socialist Labor) at Brussels. We present below reports of these conferences, by John Strachey and Ludwig Lore. The New Republic does not assume responsibility for the views expressed by the authors, but presents their articles as a matter of information.—THE EDITORS.

I: The Communists

THE REACTIONS of opinion to the recent meeting of the Communist International, or Comintern, are worth analyzing. On the one hand, what is usually known as liberal opinion, both in Great Britain and in America, has commented on an alleged change in Communist outlook and policy. Many such commentators have gone so far as to state (though not for the first time) that the Communist International has abandoned its revolutionary outlook.

On the other hand the two most important capitalist governments in the world, those of Great Britain and the United States, have apparently drawn an exactly contrary conclusion. They have both protested to the Russian government that it ought not to have allowed so revolutionary a body as the Communist International to have met upon Soviet territory. And the United States government has gone so far as to threaten a breach of diplomatic relations with Russia unless the Soviet government shall by some unspecified means restrain certain United States citizens, such as Mr. Earl Browder, from making revolutionary utterances. Any line of policy that can evoke such sharply differing interpretations is surely worthy of investigation. This article can attempt such an investigation only, however, in the broadest outline, as I have not yet been able to read the original documents or proceedings of the Congress.

What then was done in Moscow at this World Congress of the Comintern? Among a large number of other important decisions the following three steps seem to me to have been of decisive importance in indicating the present general line of the Comintern. First, Dimitroff was appointed general secretary of the organization. This appointment in itself was equivalent to a declaration of policy, for Dimitroff is today more than an individual. He is in Europe, and to a lesser extent all over the world, the living symbol and embodiment of the revolutionary working class. We must ask whether the Comintern, if it had intended to abandon its revolutionary mission, would have appointed such a man as its general secretary.

The second decision of the Comintern was to renew and reëmphasize the offers of the United Front to coöperate with every working-class organization, and for that matter with every middle-class organization, that should be willing to take part in the struggle against war and fascism. It can hardly be said that this decision represented any change of policy, but it is true that the world situation has changed since the Communist International nearly three years ago issued its appeal for unity. That appeal has had a very considerable degree of success. In France the United Front has been fully formed and has had a decisive effect on the political life of the whole country. Throughout the rest of Europe working-class unity has been achieved to a greater or lesser degree. Nowhere but in France can it be said fully to exist, but nowhere has it failed to take at any rate some steps forward. Even in Great Britain, where less progress has probably been made than anywhere else, the Trades Union Congress, which is sitting as I write, has already shown that the attitude of mind of the organized British working class towards the Communist Party of Great Britain has undergone a very definite change. Nobody who compares the contemptuous references to the Communists contained in Sir Walter Citrine's speeches of a year or so ago, with the bitter but defensive, and in a sense respectful, speech he made in favor of their exclusion this year, can have any doubt of that change.

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And in the event the General Council of the Trades Union Congress was only able to prevent an open declaration of the rights of the Communists in the trade unions by a very narrow majority. Again, the Socialist and Labor International has now placed on the agenda of its next meeting the question of international unity. Hence the renewed declarations of the Comintern in favor of unity were made in a new world situation in which they could be couched in a more confident tone.

The third significant step taken by the Congress was the declaration that the Communist International would support the struggle of small states for their independence, if and when these states were assailed by one or another of the great predatory capitalist empires. The Congress was no doubt thinking primarily of the smaller capitalist states of Europe, such as Lithuania and Czechoslovakia, the independence of which is today acutely menaced by German fascist imperialism. But almost before the Congress had adjourned, another small, and feudal rather than capitalist, state became acutely threatened by Italian fascist imperialism. The sudden emergence of the Ethiopian crisis was a striking testimony to the importance and relevance to the existing world situation of this last decision of the Congress. The general line of supporting the struggle of the peoples of all colonial, or in this case potentially colonial, parts of the world against the great capitalist empires has always been a fundamental part of the Comintern's policy.

The Italian aggression against Ethiopia has already produced a wave of anti-imperialist sentiment throughout the black races of the world. Nothing can be more important than that the Communist International should show its solidarity with the oppressed black races; and by far the most practical and effective way in which this solidarity can be shown is for the workers of the other capitalist empires, and particularly of France and Britain, to demand of their governments that they should restrain the Italian aggression. It is perfectly true that these governments are from one point of view themselves inclined to restrain Italy, because their own imperialist interests are menaced by her. This criss-cross of contradiction between the interests of rival imperialisms is one of the most important characteristics of the present world situation, and it would be folly indeed for any world revolutionary organization not to exploit it to the full. Hence, when the workers of Britain and France put pressure on their governments to restrain Italy, they do make use of these inter-imperialist conflicts, and they would be fools not to.

This vital question of the utilization by the revolutionary working class of the passionate conflicts between the rival imperialist empires raises the whole general issue of the recent diplomatic policy of the Soviet Union. Now, so far as I know, no one denies the very great skill with which Russian diplomacy has in the last three years managed to divide the capitalist powers which up till that time were arrayed in a solid combination against it. When we reflect on the intense hatred of the Soviet Union necessarily felt by the most powerful interests in every capitalist state, interests that directly or indirectly control every capitalist government, the achievement of having, even temporarily, broken the capitalist united front can be seen to have been a brilliant one. To have half-induced, half-forced the French government to form what amounts to a defensive alliance with the U.S.S.R. against the menace of Fascist Germany is a great achievement, which in the perspective of history will increase.

No one, I repeat, denies the ability of the Soviet's diplomatic policy or its successes, but it is vociferously asserted that this success has only been won at the cost of injuring, perhaps fatally, the world revolutionary movement. Revolutionaries in those capitalist countries with which the Soviet government has entered into friendly relations have, it is asserted, been hamstrung. The Communist Parties of these countries have, it is alleged, been ordered by the Comintern to pipe down.

What is the truth of this allegation? The French situation surely affords us the best test of it. The Soviet Union has actually entered into what amounts to an alliance with the French government. Have the activities of the French Communist Party been hamstrung and thwarted by this fact? Has the French party been ordered by its "Moscow paymasters" to keep quiet and avoid annoying M. Laval and his Cabinet?

As everybody knows, the facts are the exact contrary. Precisely since the French government was forced into association with the Soviet Union the French Communist Party has made unparalleled progress. In no capitalist country up till now has a Communist Party ever advanced at anything like the speed achieved by the French party in the last year. It is hardly too much to say that Communist propaganda fills France today, and that the mass working-class movements, inspired and largely guided by the Communist Party, are today a decisive force.

The French instance is the most striking, but, after all, analogous events have taken place in America itself. I was in the United States in the winter of 1933, when the American government recognized the Soviet Union, and I well remember being solemnly told that the Russian government's pledge not to conduct propaganda against the American government implied the winding up of the American Communist Party. Several questioners got up during the lectures I was then giving and gave me this piece of news. But in fact it has been precisely since the autumn of 1933 that the American Communist Party has progressed most rapidly. Far from disbanding, it has steadily come forward as the one serious persistent organization opposing American capitalism, capable of becoming able to lead the tremendous, but at present inchoate, working-class forces of America.

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The truth is that we are entering a period of international crises, of wars and revolutions, in which class, national and race conflicts will be intertwined in a bewildering complexity. It will be, as it is now, the task of the Communist International to study this situation in the most precise detail, and to instruct the working-class movement throughout the world on how to utilize, for the interests of the workers and the defeat of the capitalists, every force and clash of interest that can be so used.

Already we have had the strongest proofs that the legitimate aspirations of the subject and semi-subject peoples for national independence can be a vital asset to the workers in the class struggle. But we must now realize that so also can be the morally quite illegitimate interests of one capitalist empire as against another.

On a capitalist basis the case of the Italian capitalists as against the British capitalists is very strong. Nothing could be more ridiculously hypocritical than for the British capitalists to raise their hands in holy horror against the absorption of one small corner of Africa by somebody else. Nothing could be more ignorant than to suppose with the English liberals that the League of Nations can permanently ensure the peace of the world. The Covenant of the League of Nations, if it becomes a reality, will still be, in the main, the camouflaged will of the British and French capitalists, and their satellites, to maintain the existing division of the world that suits them, and to deny the desperate need for new areas to exploit, felt by the German and Italian capitalists. Moreover, these latter dissatisfied capitalist groups must sooner or later hazard the attempt to change the division of the world in their favor, for they cannot indefinitely, or indeed long, continue to exist as capitalists unless they manage to obtain more of the spoils.

But all this does not mean that it is not to the vital interest of the British and French workers to force their governments to restrain the aggression of the German and Italian capitalists rather than to come to some temporary deal with them at the expense of independent backward states such as Ethiopia, or small capitalist states such as Portugal. For the whole enormous mass of popular sentiment in favor of peace will be mobilized against Fascist aggression. The authority of the League of Nations will be immensely increased, and it will, therefore, become much harder for Germany to attack any member of the League, including the Soviet Union.

The plain fact is that the defense of the Soviet Union is today the paramount interest of the workers of the world. All those babblers, at once despicable and pitiable, who talk of a conflict of interest between the revolutionary workers of the capitalist world and the government of the Soviet Union, are doing all that their puny power can to harm what is in fact the united interest of both.

If the Soviet Union is preserved from attack for another five years, it will dominate the world situation. The influence of its example upon the workers of the rest of the world will be decisive. There will be no need whatever for the Soviet government to utter a word of propaganda, still less to lift a finger in aggression against any capitalist government. The contrast between the life led by the masses within and without the Soviet borders will be the most revolutionary fact that there has ever been in the history of the world. If the essential interest of the workers of the rest of the world is to destroy capitalism and to establish socialism in the quickest possible time (and this is their essential interest), then by far the most effective thing they can immediately do to further their own interests is to preserve the Soviet Union from the ever present danger of combined capitalist attack.

JOHN STRACHEY.

II: The Socialists

WHAT WITH the Communist International moving toward the Right and the reformist Socialist Labor International steering a careful course to the Left, he is a wise man who knows where he belongs in the labor movement. The resolution adopted by the August meeting of the Executive Committee of the Second International in Brussels on the Italo-Ethiopian conflict, in the decisiveness of its demands, represents as startling and significant a development as that which followed the Stalin declaration in the Franco-Russian alliance. National units are talking of a general strike to stop the war and of refusal to handle supplies for Italy. The Labor Party of Great Britain and the Socialist Party of France are reported to be exchanging views for future joint action in the industrial field to combat war. Whether these potentialities will be translated into action is beside the point. What is important is that sentiment is crystallizing in the international Socialist movement for a united stand against fascism and war.

A thesis on the war question presented to the International Bureau by Otto Bauer, leader of the Austrian Social Democracy; Theodor Dan, leader of the Russian Menshevist Party; and Jean Zyromski, leader of the left wing of the French Socialist Party, with a foreword by Friedrich Adler, secretary of the International, strikes a note that has not been heard in that organization for more than two decades. It is symptomatic of the sentiment that prevails in all sections of the Socialist Labor International that the right-wing leaders of that organization did not dare to bury this document, but submitted it to the affiliated parties for consideration and action by the next Congress.

It is the purpose of the Bauer thesis to prevent the Second International from falling to pieces in a new world war as it did in 1914. It demands a united policy to be adhered to by the Socialist Parties of all nations in case of war. It proceeds

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on the assumption that the next war will find Hitlerized Germany and its supporters on the one side arrayed against the Soviet Union and its allies on the other. The chief aim of the Social Democracy in such a war, says the thesis, must be the "decisive defeat of German fascism and the establishment of the proletarian revolution in the Reich."

The role accorded to the Soviet Union is perhaps the most striking feature of the document as a whole. In the past Otto Bauer had always stood practically alone in his defense of the U.S.S.R. as a proletarian republic. To find the name of the anti-Bolshevist Theodor Dan under a document calling on labor to come to Soviet Russia's defense is startling.

The thesis reads, in part:

> The Soviet Union expropriated the large landowning and capitalist classes, built up a mighty nationalized industry, collectivized agriculture and raised the cultural level of the peoples living within its borders. This transformation was achieved under the reign of a dictatorship. But this dictatorship can and must be gradually transformed into a socialist democracy. The rapidity of this process will be determined, first, by the willingness and ability of the Socialist proletariat to combat fascist tendencies in world development and, second, by the rapidity with which the Soviet Union develops its productive forces and overcomes its economic deficiencies . . . Such a development of the Soviet Union would make it the prototype of a Socialist social order, and would contribute tremendously to its power to win the world proletariat for the Socialist idea. The defeat of the Soviet Union in case of war would cut off this entire development, would mean the overthrow of the Soviet Union. . . . If it comes to war, the interests of international socialism demand that the Soviet Union be victorious.

For the present, according to the thesis, the League of Nations must be supported to confront with an insuperable coalition those countries that are driving the world into war. But at no time and under no circumstances must the activity of the International be made dependent upon the decisions of the League or on its definitions of what constitutes an aggressor.

For the coming eventuality of war the document proposes the following:

> It goes without saying that labor in the Soviet Union must protect the revolutionary state against attack with its whole strength and its unbounded enthusiasm. In the case of the U.S.S.R., even those Socialist Parties that are unequivocally opposed to Bolshevist dictatorship must recognize the unlimited and unconditional justification of national defense and must, for the duration of the war, subordinate all other demands to this necessity in the interest of victory for the world proletariat.

There is, in every line of this notable statement, a clear-sighted recognition of realities and a freedom from illusion that distinguishes it from the meaningless anti-war resolutions of the past. Its positive position on the Soviet Union, its determination to call labor to arms in defense of the first proletarian state against the oncoming storm of fascist reaction and capitalist imperialism, is no whit less emphatic than that of the Communists. On the question of fatherland defense and civil peace it is a great deal more positive than the policy adopted by the Seventh Congress of the Third International. It is free from the taint of political opportunism. It is a sincere attempt to save the revolutionary labor movement of the world from destruction: first, by so solidifying the Second International and its position toward war that it will not be shattered in another crisis; second, by liquidating the destructive fratricidal conflict in the ranks of labor and restoring the unity of the labor movement.

The last word on this declaration is still to be spoken. Will the Socialist Labor International adopt its position? The outlook is far from bright. In Belgium, Germany, Holland, Sweden, Denmark, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary and the United States, the old guard will probably turn thumbs down on so clean a break with the ways of the past. Nor will the Labor Party of Great Britain be more favorably inclined. H. N. Brailsford, who generally tends toward the Left and in most questions supports Otto Bauer's point of view, will oppose the latter's recognition of the League of Nations as an instrument of peace as well as his advocacy of regional pacts. Leon Blum questions the wisdom of a hard-and-fast war policy for the International, claiming that whatever action it takes will depend on the conditions out of which the war arises. On the basis of these conditions, he insists, the International will have to decide its attitude. There is a fatal familiarity about these precepts. Was it not a similar course that brought the Second International face to face with an inflamed nationalism in 1914, too late to appeal to the sanity and the solidarity of its national parties?

Yet it is not impossible that Otto Bauer and his supporters may succeed in lining up a majority for their war program in the next Congress of the Socialist Labor International. There is a vigorous ferment at work in the Socialist Parties the world over. In every nation there is growing a left-wing movement that is carrying on a more or less effective fight against the sterile policies of the old guard. The American Militants, the New Beginners of Germany, the British Socialist League, the entire Austrian Social Democracy, together with Leftist groups in the Socialist Parties of a number of other countries, may experience a rapid growth in the hothouse atmosphere of present-day war politics. If so, there is a chance that the conservative majority may be turned into a minority when the Social Democracy of the world next meets to chart its course through a fascist-ridden period.

LUDWIG LORE.

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Ethiopia and Kenya

ON A MONDAY afternoon in the House of Commons, the British Foreign Secretary, Sir Samuel Hoare, implied in answer to questions that the contemplated rape of Ethiopia by Mussolini's mock-Romans may be justifiable on the ground that Ethiopia has not abolished slavery within her borders as she promised to do when she joined the League in 1923. The Right Honorable Gentleman was not quite sure of the facts, but his statement left a strong suspicion that slavery still existed under the rule of the Lion of Judah. A private Tory member, however, had no doubts about the matter at all, and indignantly asked whether it wasn't "well known that slavery has not been abolished in Ethiopia, and that our own colonies actually had raids upon them for slaves."

Less than the distance between New York and Chicago, that is to say, about seven hundred miles from Addis Ababa, the capital of the alleged slave state of Ethiopia, is Nairobi, the capital of the alleged free British Colony and Protectorate of Kenya. Within the borders of this territory dwell some three million Africans whose lot it is to prove that one may be nominally free and yet actually enslaved, for the lives of the greater number of these Africans are spent in compulsory toil for the benefit of the seventeen thousand European settlers.

The British government, which is ultimately responsible for the administration of Kenya, is honest to the extent that one of its Ordinances governing the colony is frankly named the "Compulsory Labor Ordinance." When the government wants a job done, such as making a road or clearing a piece of land, and there is difficulty for some reason in obtaining labor, the native authorities are told to supply the men. As the native chiefs are no longer elected by the Africans themselves, but are merely salaried government servants, liable to dismissal if they disobey orders, the supply of compulsory labor is invariably forthcoming. However, as this system of forced labor affects only a few thousands of the African workers, whereas the nominally free labor system touches all the rest of the black inhabitants, the real beauty of free British rule in Kenya is best seen in examining the conditions under which the average African works.

In the old days before the arrivals of European civilization in Kenya the African worked under a communal system on his own land, and knew nothing of the joys of British imperialism. Came civilization in the shape of some white adventurers of whom Lord Delamere was the most notorious example, and soon arose the problem of providing workers for the white settlers. With commendable perspicacity it was realized that once the African was separated from his land he was economically helpless. Therefore, by various means, some violent, some merely fraudulent, the Africans were deprived of the greater part of their lands, and all the best of them, so that the territory left to them was quite insufficient to support the crowded native agricultural population. Africans, therefore, had to leave the land (known as "native reserves") that was left to them, and go out and work on the settlers' farms.

But, with the increase of white settlers, even the herding of the Africans into their reserves did not put sufficient pressure on them to compel them to come out and work for the farmers. So a new device was incorporated into the shining imperial structure. This was the Native Hut and Poll Tax Ordinance, which is the law of Kenya today. Under this law it is provided that a tax of 20s. ($5) or 12s. ($3) shall be paid on each hut owned by a native taxpayer, or a poll tax by all able males "of the apparent age of sixteen or over" who do not pay the hut tax. When it is remembered that the average yearly income of an African *family* in Kenya is less than £5 ($25) the weight of this tax becomes apparent.

As money does not grow in the African reserves, the native inhabitant has to go out and earn his tax. Should he refuse, or be unable to pay, the tax may be recovered by distress—*i. e.*, by the seizure of vendible property, such as cattle. If there is no such property, the taxpayer is liable to a sentence of three months' imprisonment. In 1933—the year of Hitler's triumph—according to the official Report of the Native Affairs Department, 8,561 persons were confined to detention camps. This tax is imposed by a legislature in which the 17,000 Europeans, who do not pay the tax, are represented by eleven members, and the 3,000,000 Africans, who do pay it, by no members. Parenthetically, one may add that in Rhodesia—another British territory, but happily remote from Ethiopian slave raids—armed police recently shot dead a number of African copper workers who protested against the raising of the poll tax from 10 to 15 shillings.

"From the farmers' point of view," wrote a lady long resident in Kenya, "the ideal reserve is a convenient recruiting ground for labor, a place from which the able-bodied go out to work, returning occasionally to rest and beget the next generation of laborers." In fairness to the British government it should be said that most of the reserves have now attained the ideal. Once outside them, the worker makes a contract with the white settler, the terms of which are governed by the Employment of Natives Ordinance. The characteristic features of this contract are that breaches on the part of the employer are matters for civil

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remedy, whereas breaches by the worker may be prosecuted *criminally*. For instance, under Section 47 of this law a worker may be fined £5 or imprisoned for one month for failing to begin work at the stipulated time, leaving work, using "offensive language," etc. Or, he may be fined £7-10-0 ($37.50) or be imprisoned for six months for another multitude of offenses, including "failure to prevent damage to his master's property," or leaving his employment without, as the pre-Mussolini Romans called it, the *"animus revertendi," i. e.*, the intention to return. When it is recalled that the average gross monthly wages of the African worker are about 25 shillings ($6.25) and, further, that a "month" means thirty *working* days, few will be surprised that the African's temptation to quit his employment is continuous and urgent.

The Empire-builders certainly realized this fact, and to make the escape of their workers more difficult they devised yet one more imperial jewel, the *Kipandi*. The Natives Registration Ordinance provides that every male African of the apparent age of sixteen has to be registered and carry on his person a *kipandi*, or pass, which contains in addition to personal particulars and the amount of his wage (no nonsense about bluffing a new employer into giving a higher wage), the fingerprints of the bearer. The *kipandi* has to be produced on demand, and altering any of the particulars on it is a grave offense.

So it will be seen that although there are no slaves in British Kenya, nevertheless there are considerable restrictions on the freedom of the African inhabitant. He may stay with his master, and enjoy, under the conditions described, proximity to European culture. If he is displeased therewith, he may run away, but then he is liable to arrest and imprisonment. Even back in his ideal reserve he is subject to punishment, and, of course, as he did not wait for his wages he would not be able to pay his tax, and so his home would be burned. The result is that the great majority of the free workers do not run away from their masters, and although in 1933 over 900,000 Africans were registered and fingerprinted, a scant 3,092 were convicted for offenses under the Registration Ordinance. Although the African worker is allowed the privileges of labor and taxpaying, political activity or unionizing is punishable by imprisonment for long terms.

But when all is said, it is well known that British courts are just, and that however harshly the laws may seem to bear on the African subjects of His Majesty, the courts at least will see that the rights left to them are rigorously enforced. One of these undoubted rights is the right to live (for what use is a dead African to a white Empire-builder?). The Kenya courts, however, have often taken a different view. Before the War, for instance, a settler one afternoon sat under the shade of his verandah watching his "boys" at work, and from time to time besought them to work harder. The method of the request was the original one of firing a rifle close to any African who appeared to be loafing. By an unfortunate accident a bullet collided with, and killed, one of the "loafers," and the Empire-builder was subsequently charged with murder. The courts, however, discovered that the settler had merely been guilty of "simple hurt." This precedent has been followed more than once when, as has happened, an Empire-builder has flogged a worker to death. Flogging of workers is not uncommon, for after all the Africans rarely seem to have their hearts in their work.

Since Sir Samuel Hoare was questioned about slavery in Ethiopia it has become apparent even to the cautious, but incompetent, staff of the Foreign Office that Il Duce's proposed triumph in Africa will constitute a threat not only to the imperial proprietors of the Kenya slave state, but, more important still, to the equally disinterested empire-builders who have been saving Egypt from herself for so many tranquil and profitable years. Accordingly new virtue has been found in the League and in an enlarged British fleet in the Mediterranean. So it is that their interests in Egypt and the British African colonies have deprived the masters of imperialism of the pleasure of wishing godspeed to their pupil Mussolini—the Liberator of the Italian workers—as he sets out to emancipate the slaves of Ethiopia and introduce into that backward, unhappy country—ballistically, chemically or otherwise—a true capitalist civilization, modeled preferably on imperial Britain's best. LESLIE READE.

The Poverty Belt

MANY WRITERS have described, in articles or stories, the miserable condition of the Southern mountaineers. To what extent are their statements correct? At least a partial answer to this question may be found in three eminently "objective"—and very conservative—documents recently issued by the federal government.[1]

"The basic problems of the region"—I quote from the elaborate, if confused and frequently evasive monograph on the Southern Appalachians—"grow out of maladjustments in land use and in the relation of population to land." These maladjustments have a concrete physical basis in a number of factors that must consistently block all efforts at improvement by way of superficial reforms, including subsistence homesteads. First, the difficult topography of the 70,000,000-acre region, ranging from the moderately fertile Appalachian valleys to

[1] Department of Agriculture: Economic and Social Problems and Conditions of the Southern Appalachians. Miscellaneous Publication, No. 205. 184 pages, maps, tables, illus. 50 cents.

Department of Labor, Women's Bureau: Potential Earning Power of Southern Mountaineer Handicraft, by Bertha M. Nienburg. Bull. No. 128. 56 pages. 10 cents.

Department of Labor, Women's Bureau: Women in Arkansas Industries, by Bertha Blair. Bull. 124. 48 pages. 5 cents.

Obtainable at prices given from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C.

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the "most definitely pathological" mountain sections. This fact alone enormously complicates the problems of roads and transportation (lack of economic opportunity," states the report, "is associated with lack of roads") and of rationalized large-scale agriculture. Second, unusually heavy rains lead to serious erosion and excessive drainage, without benefit of adequate forest cover. Third, a below-average quality of soil in most sections of the country compels the extensive use of costly fertilizer; even when this is done, average yields of crops are pathetically low, forcing continual migration to higher, more rocky and less fertile ground. Fourth, population pressure: with approximately 6,000,000 people, the Southern Appalachian region has a population density of from 50 to 75 per square mile, as compared with 41 for the United States. In the ten years 1920-30 this population increased 16 percent, and since 1900 the increase (even taking account of emigration) has been anywhere from 14 to 140 percent. The birth rate was highest in the economically most backward sections, reaching the astounding figure of 746 per thousand women of child-bearing age.

Despite a rapid industrial development throughout the South, agriculture is still the principal source of livelihood in the Southern Appalachians. "Livelihood," however, is a somewhat exaggerated term to use in view of facts like these: one-tenth of the farmers had a farm business large enough to represent more than $1,500 a year "on products sold, traded or used" (compare with the 1929 average for the United States of $1,835 per farm); deducting for major farm expenditures (feed, fertilizer, hired labor, taxes and machinery), the net annual return to the Southern farmer was a little less than $250—and that in the pre-depression year of 1929. "On more than 65,000 farms no cows were milked in 1929, indicating"—the report here executes a miracle of understatement—"that many of the families may not have had an adequate supply of milk for family use."

Farm taxes were adequate, at any rate—for those who managed to collect them. Between 1913 and 1929 the average tax per acre in this region *increased 241 percent:* exactly double the rate of increase for the entire country; in North Carolina the increase was 631 percent. One has only to check this fact against A.A.A. crop-curtailment schemes, and then recall Secretary Wallace's statement that "it takes more than four times as many units of farm produce to pay the farm tax bill now as it took in 1914."

Small wonder that most of the Appalachian farmers find it absolutely necessary to supplement farm income by outside work on the roads, in mines, factories and commercial establishments—or that the mountaineer folk cling desperately to the straw of handicraft work. In her pamphlet on this last subject, Miss Nienburg points out that of the 15,000 persons engaged in this pathetic activity 95 percent are women, and that the total income from this one source in 1933 averaged about $52 per year per person—or an hourly rate of from 10 to 12 cents for women and from 20 to 25 cents for men. This in the heart of the region where the T.V.A. still talks about producing a social millennium. As for those white women so fortunate as to have more or less regular jobs in the industrial centers, Miss Blair's pamphlet on Arkansas, where conditions are not dissimilar, tells us that in 1932 nearly three-fourths of the 2,303 cases investigated had median weekly earnings of $10 or less; 60 percent averaged $8 per week or less.

Educational, cultural and general living conditions are touched upon in the monograph on the Southern Appalachians. They are not a matter for pride. Farm dwellings were valued in 1930 at an average of $764, compared with a national average of $1,207 (itself low enough); in one county over a quarter of the dwellings have leaky roofs, thousands of others are virtual disease traps "sheltering," in many cases, families of eight, ten or more persons. As for "conveniences": taking the region as a whole, certain elementary benefits of the Power Age were supplied to farm homes in the following percentages (national averages in parentheses): Water piped into dwellings, 7 percent (15 percent); homes equipped for electric lighting, 6 percent (15 percent); telephones, 17 percent (35 percent); radio sets, 5 percent (20 percent).

This was in 1930: five years of acute depression are not likely to have improved matters for any but those in the upper-income brackets. When even in "normal" times a family of from four to twelve and more persons considered itself well off on a precarious annual income of $600, we can be pretty sure that everything above mere subsistence is regarded as a luxury—even schools, health and recreation. Illiteracy is widespread, averaging 10 or 12 percent for the population over twenty years of age; in many districts less than one-fourth of third-grade school children got as far as the first year of high school, as compared with the national ratio of 70 percent. Health conditions are appalling, with an extremely high incidence of tuberculosis, pneumonia, pellagra, typhoid, anemia and other diseases directly traceable to social maladjustments and criminal neglect. With less than two dentists and seven physicians for each 5,000 inhabitants, and with hospital facilities providing only about nine beds per 5,000 (23.1 beds is the estimated minimum requirement), it is not difficult to realize the grave impairment of health that proceeds with such shameful rapidity in the "tragic area" of the Southern Appalachians.

HAROLD WARD.

This is the third of several articles by Mr. Ward summarizing and discussing important government publications and other official documents.—THE EDITORS.

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Washington Notes

Portrait of a Chief Justice—Worries Over the A.L.L.—Where Does Housing Stand Today? Wallace Upsets the Republicans

THE Democrats have apparently become reconciled to fighting the next election on the constitutional issue. This has been Mr. Roosevelt's plan ever since the Schechter decision, but it is only lately that he has been able to convince the party's leaders of its wisdom. Last week, at Alexandria, Virginia, Secretary Roper announced the slogan, "Forward with the Constitution," which apparently will be the official cheer, followed by nine Roosevelts, in 1936. Attorney-General Cummings intends to hurry cases involving the A.A.A. and T.V.A. to a decision as soon as the Supreme Court reconvenes, two weeks from now. The Securities and Exchange Commission has volunteered to submit to a judicial test of its powers. A few days ago, in Kansas City, Senator Harrison predicted that a new N.R.A. would be the chief legislation to be considered at the coming session of Congress.

The administration assumes that the Supreme Court's decisions this winter will be almost uniformly hostile. This pessimism is based upon its reading of the character of Mr. Hughes, who is regarded as the determining factor in the Court. Tucked away in various New Deal agencies are a number of extremely brilliant young constitutional lawyers who accept the theory that constitutional interpretation is governed by economic pressures rather than by legal precedents. They believe that New Deal legislation, as a whole, presents the issue of business freedom versus government regulation, and expect Mr. Hughes to vote consistently on the side of business.

Mr. Hughes's general attitude can be given with some assurance. He is a man who, through the greater part of his life, was driven by fierce ambition. He has a keen sense of history, and is aware that had he been elected in 1916, he would have been a wartime President, and would have ranked—as Wilson now does—with Washington and Lincoln. The sense of injury and frustration that came from his defeat in 1916 remained with him until his confirmation as Chief Justice in 1930.

It is well known that during the last five years he has mellowed to an extraordinary degree. Acquaintances maintain that this has come from his belief that he has the opportunity to be remembered as a great law-giver, as the equal and fellow of Jay, Marshall and Taney. They do not, consequently, expect him to sidestep the issue presented by the New Deal. As in the Schechter case, when his silvery beard trembled with wrathful emotion, they believe that he will endeavor to turn his decisions into classic statements of the philosophy of laissez-faire capitalism. It is the hard rock of Mr. Hughes's character, rather than any phraseology of the Constitution, that has convinced New Deal lawyers that they must fight on the constitutional issue.

The American Liberty League worries the Democratic National Committee more than it cares publicly to admit. Despite the prominent Democrats on its executive committee, the League is now committed to the defeat of Mr. Roosevelt and his party. In the view of Democratic strategists, it has become purely a Republican device for raising money from business men who would not contribute directly to the Republican National Committee. Democrats are beginning to talk about the similarity of the present situation and that of 1920, when Mr. Will H. Hays slid Harding into office on a chute-the-chute plastered over with currency. In my opinion, however, this exaggerates Mr. Hays's part in the 1920 election. Harding's greatest advantage was the disillusionment that the mass of voters felt with Wilson's peace program, and Mr. Roosevelt's greatest handicap now is the disillusionment created by the New Deal. This is not, however, to minimize the importance of a big campaign fund, which is only second to that of a good cause.

An offhand suggestion made by Mr. Roosevelt at a recent press conference has brought long, sober thoughts to low-cost-housing advocates in the administration. Mr. Roosevelt said that he had been considering whether future housing projects could not be financed by a revolving fund. When the present housing program was completed, he said, the homes that had been built could be sold to the public, certificates issued against the indebtedness thus created, and these certificates discounted to finance new housing projects. The suggestion received little attention from the press. But to the housing enthusiasts in Washington, it came as a rude notification that there might be no further funds for housing in next year's budget, now in process of formulation. This suspicion was heightened by recent prominence of Mr. Peter Grimm among the advisers of Mr. Morgenthau. Mr. Grimm is a large New York City real-estate operator, and chairman of a lobbying committee that has for years fought to keep down New York City taxes. He was brought to the Treasury to suggest ways by which private home-building might be encouraged, and the impression is general that his influence, such as it is, has been strongly against further government competition.

Last week's primary in Pennsylvania was only moderately disappointing to the administration. Partly at the instigation of Washington, Governor Earle campaigned for a constitutional convention which would write the New Deal's labor and social-security program into Pennsylvania's fundamental law. Although the proposal was defeated in the state by ex-Senator Joseph R. Grundy's campaign expenditures, it won by a slight margin in Philadelphia and the administration hopes that Philadelphia can be held permanently as a Democratic city.

Secretary Wallace, on the whole the least politically minded member of the Cabinet, has just done something that will cause deep grief to the Republican strategists. On the ground that the late Senator Long's filibuster in the closing hours of the session cut off funds for administration of the plan for potato control, Mr. Wallace has abandoned the compulsory aspects of the scheme. Under the provisions now canceled, a national quota for commercial potato farmers was set up, and a tax of three-quarters of a cent a pound would have been levied on excess production. There would also have been heavy penalties for

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both sellers and buyers of potatoes who disregarded the provisions of the law. Now a voluntary plan will be tried under which growers agreeing to limitation will receive subsidies. Innocently or not, Mr. Wallace has broken the Republicans' hearts. They were all prepared to go out and defy the law, regretting, like Nathan Hale, that they could die only once for dear old Hooverism. It was a mean trick.

Washington. T. R. B.

Other People's Money

Holding the Bag for the F.H.A.—Mortgages Into Debentures—Who Is Backing the Van Boys?

AN EXTRAORDINARY little chapter in the history of the Federal Housing Administration has been opened. It will be remembered that the F.H.A. was Roosevelt's answer in 1934 to the prayer for housing. The clamor for a real housing program was great then. From Washington came assurances that big things were in the making in this area of the New Deal. Then the announcement was made with such a blast of trumpets as has accompanied nothing else in the New Deal save the N.R.A. It was the F.H.A.—a grand plan to provide bank loans guaranteed by the government to homeowners to fix up old houses. It was a typical Roosevelt solution. One group demanded housing. Another group opposed it. So he arranged a plan to fix up old houses. But the plan had another feature—guaranteed mortgages. The government agreed to guarantee loans on real-estate properties up to 80 percent of the appraised value of the property.

Apparently, loans of this kind have been made. How many it is difficult to say, since the ballyhoo put out by the F.H.A. is so confusing in its comprehensive and blatant claims that no one can tell just what has happened there, save that the scheme has been a pretty big failure. However, financial newspaper readers now are startled by a large advertisement through which a brokerage firm is offering $1,250,000 of these mortgages to the public.

No one has to be told that an 80-percent loan on a first mortgage is not a good business proposition even though it makes provision for amortization. But in this case the holder of the note enjoys a government guarantee, so that if the property is foreclosed on and taken by the institution that handled the mortgage, the note-holder will receive at once in its stead three-percent debenture bonds guaranteed by the United States government as to principal and interest.

The institutions that handled these mortgages originally now wish to sell them. What is more, apparently a business is about to be developed in them.

I do not pretend to know anything about the mortgages involved in this particular transaction. But one can see with half an eye the splendid field this opens up for bailing out holders of shaky mortgages. A man holds a note for a new mortgage to be taken by some institution, or better still, himself takes a new mortgage through some authorized institution on the same property. This new mortgage, now guaranteed by the United States government, is put in the hands of a broker to sell to the public because of the government guarantee behind it. One thing is certain. Whoever buys such a mortgage ought to insist on knowing as much about the property, the man who signed the note and from whom payment is expected, as if he were making a mortgage loan in the first instance. Otherwise he may find his investment suddenly turning into a three-percent debenture instead of a five-percent mortgage.

There has been some talk about the Van Sweringens' empire tottering to its end. The last act is supposed to be set for September 30 in the old auction exchange in Vesey Street, when all of the securities held by J. P. Morgan and Company and associated bankers as collateral for a huge Van Sweringen loan will be offered to the highest bidder. Chief among the properties held by the Morgan firm are the common shares of the Alleghany Corporation. These control the Chesapeake and Ohio, the Marquette, the Missouri-Pacific, the Erie and numerous other smaller roads and a vast tangle of coal, hotel, lake-boat, utility and other properties.

The amount due the bankers is $51,000,000. The highest value I can see in the collection of securities held by the Morgans is around $7,000,000. But this is split into various parcels. It is hard to believe that more than $5,000,000 will be bid for the parcel containing the Allegheny shares. It is generally understood that the Van Sweringens will bid the properties in. But it is also believed that some other interests have horned in to supply the money. Who it is no one seems to know, though it is said the aged Leonor F. Loree of the Delaware and Hudson is going to muscle in on this great system by going in with the Van Sweringens.

It is a little early to count the Vans out. But it is worth keeping in mind what is about to happen. The bankers hold their collateral and have to decide either to take it over and become railroad operators or sell it. They have properly decided to sell. I am assured that they have no strings to it; that they are not financing the Vans in any way to buy the collateral in; that the Vans have their own plans and a brand new backer. But if the Vans, with or without a backer, bid in these shares, here is what will have happened. Their indebtedness on this loan is around $51,000,000. They will be getting clear of this debt and, as usual, without putting up any of their own money. They will be getting it from someone else, as they always have. With the debt shaken off, their hold on their railroads will have been reëstablished. And they will then depend on our kindly old Uncle Sam via the R.F.C. to carry them through the reorganization of their various roads with the aid of R.F.C. money. Presently they may be sitting quite pretty once more.

But if Leonor F. Loree horns into that situation by the mere process of getting an interest in the Alleghany Corporation, we will have the holding-company problem again presented to us in another dramatic situation. What will the I.C.C. do about it? And, furthermore, what will Congress, having acted on utility holding companies, do about the continued existence of the railroad holding company through which the manipulations of the Van Sweringens and others have been carried on?

JOHN T. FLYNN.

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Words and Music

IN PICTURES, it would be natural to expect that the best thing this country could turn out would be the musicals. We have a first-class body of popular song writers, the best jazz bands (marvelous enough in themselves), literally millions to squander on choruses, singers, hoofers, and people like Busby Berkeley and Hermes Pan, who live apparently for nothing else but to turn these things into production numbers. And in Hollywood we have a tradition of flash comedy that isn't to be equaled.

But what comes of all this? Something like "Roberta" or "Flying Down to Rio"; something that is colorful or vibrant in this or that part, but as a whole pretty vacuous and dull. So that when a picture like "Broadway Melody of 1936" happens along, with a consistent brightness about it, the show is so much more than was expected as to seem enough. And when there is a picture that is splendid with the presence of Mr. Fred Astaire, people will get violent and say to stop grousing—what do you expect from a musical anyway?

And that is the main trouble: you can't expect anything. A musical rarely attempts to be more than a ragbag of various show tricks; and even when it does, there is no relation between its comedy, which is mostly wisecracks, and its songs, which are mostly sugar. As for possible plots, there are two in use: the Hymie-the-Hoofer type, where the boy makes the grade with his act; the My-Gal-Daisy-She-Durrives-Me-Crazy type, where the boy makes the girl. These are naturally followed with no conviction, the chief problem in any given picture being, how to bring in the first number. Somehow, before the film has gone many feet, somebody has got to take off from perfectly normal conversation into full voice, something about he won't take the train he'll walk in the rain (there is suddenly a twenty-piece band in the room), leaving everybody else in the piece to look attentive and as though they liked it, and as though such a business were the most normal of procedures.

From this first number it is customary to push on to the second. The boy, for instance, refuses to meet the girl, who refuses to meet him. So they fall in love. Singing together in close harmony for the first time, without knowing it, they sing:

> How sweet to meet
> My pet unmet
> I kiss your feet
> Madame.

And the band has got five more pieces, including marimba and steel guitar, and a chorus of forty voices resolves one of the spare seventh chords downward, *piano, pianissimo:*

> We kiss your feet'n fite'n fotum. We
> kiss. We-e-e kissyourfeetmadame—

and the line spills out into formations that would cover a four-acre lot.

In short, the second number. Having reached this point, anybody can ad-lib the rest, there being nothing to do now but keep the girl from falling into the boy's lap, by many ingenious devices—such, for example, as having him misremember where he put it. If the picture is R.K.O., the chances are the lap will have been mislaid in the butler's pantry, which is the cue for some good and funny business with Eric Blore; and just as you go out of the room, there is E. E. Horton, a nervous wreck; and there can possibly be another touch of comedy before the girl slaps his face and takes off for Lucerne, thus introducing the lonesome, or I-Yearn-for-Lucerne, number.

This business of the comedy element in musical comedy, incidentally, is a ticklish business, because often there seems to be none. "The Gay Divorcée" was a musical built and directed primarily as comedy. "Top Hat," an attempt to repeat on it, throws in practically the same stock company (Horton, Blore, Erik Rhodes, etc.); but it goes back to the old hit-or-miss method of letting the cast get as many laughs as it can and throwing in a two-line gag whenever anybody thinks about it. "Broadway Melody of 1936" is more in the tradition of the stage revue, and by far the funniest show around. It has, for example, made a place for such charming and individual drollery as that of Robert Wildhack, professor of soft-palate calisthenics, or the snore—austerely scientific in procedure and powers of research, rich with illustration, *e. g.*, the varieties of the labial, or ah-pooh, type, the thin or blonde snore, and the various expirational classes: the whistle, the wow, the straight plop, etc. This is an absolutely star performance and worth the price of the show by itself, although the story derives a lot of meaning from the parts of Jack Benny and Sid Silvers, and some brightness from the tap dancing of Buddy Ebsen and Eleanor Powell. As music, its numbers are flat and stereotyped, lacking even the tailored verve of the several pieces Mr. Berlin wrote for "Top Hat."

But when we come to the subject of music in the musicals, we come to the first consistent expression of popular songs and rhythms that this medium has seen, namely Fred Astaire. From the crowds he draws, I should say that Astaire must mean many things to many people—as, for example, glamor to married ladies in for the day from Mamaroneck, real elegance to telephone girls whose boys suck their teeth and wear pinstripe suits, etc. But one thing he manages above all others, and that is the best visual expression that has been generally seen in this country, of what is called the jazz. As an actor he is too much of a dancer, tending toward pantomime; and as a dancer he is occasionally too ball-roomy. But as a man who can create figures, intricate, unpredictable, constantly varied and yet simple, seemingly effortless, on such occasions as those when the band gathers together its brasses and rhythm section and begins to beat it out—in this capacity he is not to be equaled anywhere: he brings the strange high quality of genius to one of the baser and more common arts. Some of the aspects of jazz—its husky sadness, its occasional brawling strength—do not appear in Astaire; but its best points are sharp in such of his steps as those of the soft-shoe sandman number and in the number where the lights go down, just before the line of men, with top hats and sticks, swings up the steps, over the rim of the stage. Fred Astaire, whatever he may do in whatever picture he is in, has the beat, the swing, the debonair and damn-your-eyes violence of rhythm, all the gay contradiction and irresponsibility, of the best thing this country can contribute to musical history, which is the best American jazz.

OTIS FERGUSON.

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CORRESPONDENCE

A Cheer for Mr. Littell

SIR: It was a great pleasure to see Mr. Philip Littell's name among your reviewers after an absence of too many years. Many of your readers must hope, as I do, that we shall see more of his work in your columns.

New York City. SAMUEL SHARPE.

He Liked Huey

SIR: Your editorial on Huey Long shows prejudice. Liberals and progressives were disappointed in the man, but they based their early hopes on real accomplishments.

Louisiana made more progress under Huey Long than it had in the previous fifty years. Paved roads, free bridges, schools, public charitable institutions, revised taxation and extension of the voting privilege were real accomplishments which should be mentioned in any fair obituary of the man. Yet you had not a single good word to say for him. Verily, you overdid it. Huey Long deserves credit for his rise and victory over a powerful Bourbon ring. And he never once used race or religious prejudice to further his aim. To mention him with the Heflins is a travesty.

The Share-Our-Wealth campaign, crude as you may believe it to be, had the effect of concentrating the thought of wide masses upon the necessity of taxing unearned wealth. Huey Long has done more to popularize this principle than ten thousand editors writing in your scholarly style could ever have done.

Iola, Kan. J. FRANCIS LEMON.

An Author's Correction

SIR: Through condensing an overlengthy article two misstatements occur in "Parenthood in Decline" in your August 28 number. The sentence "England, Austria and Germany started on this decline in 1927" suggests that the population had begun to diminish in numbers in these countries. The manuscript stated that in 1927 these countries had reached a level of fertility that must inevitably result in a decline.

On page 64 the amended sentence referring to the size of family necessary to maintain a stationary population is not clear. The fashionable family of the moment consists of one or two children. An average size of family of more than three is necessary to maintain the population, and this involves many families of four or five children to counterbalance sterile marriages.

Moretonhampstead, Eng. ENID CHARLES.

Public Housing in Cleveland

SIR: In Mr. Albert Mayer's article on housing in The New Republic of September 4, he understates the amount of slum clearance now in progress in Cleveland, Ohio. Instead of one such project, there are three. One of these is under construction, and in two others demolition is under way.

Cleveland, O. R. L. BARRETT.

To Save Our Forests

SIR: It is almost thirty years since any organized program for the control of forest fires has been undertaken by the federal government. Between 1926 and 1930 the average annual acreage burned over in national forests, state and private forest lands amounted to 41,538,895 acres, in 156,183 fires. Of the annual total of 41,000,000 acres, over 37,000,000 were in the South. A reflection of the tremendous area burned in the South is found in the drought conditions in the Middle West. A detailed explanation of this would require considerable space, but the condition should prove of interest to the public in view of the indifference shown by the federal government to the devastating inroads by fire into our natural resources. It would be conservative to state that $5,000,000,000 annually is the tribute paid to uncontrolled fires in the United States included in our vast watershed area of the Mississippi, embracing some thirty-odd states.

Public indifference is reflected in legislative indifference. If we are alarmed at the prevalence of dust storms in the Middle West we should be more alarmed to realize that 700,000,000 acres of national forest lands have vanished in smoke since 1871, and neither the Coolidge nor Hoover administration prepared a constructive program to combat this menace. . . . President Roosevelt, in instituting the vast C.C.C. movement, has made a part of this plan a coördinating fire-control program. So much remains to be done and so direful would be the consequences of continued neglect that public opinion should be aroused to perpetuate this undertaking.

Santa Barbara, Calif. FREDERICK H. COWLES.

Extracts from Letters

THE National Council for Prevention of War sends an announcement of its million-dollar issue of "peace bonds" now being offered to the American public. The bonds carry a pledge that the money paid for them will be used wholly in the cause of world peace. Leading peace agencies, labor and farm organizations, clubs and churches are aiding in the sale of these bonds, which are not redeemed in money, of course, and on which the salesmen receive no commissions. The bonds are issued in denominations of $1 to $100, and the Council hopes to raise a fund of $1,000,000 through their sale. The first bond was bought by Senator Gerald P. Nye, chairman of the Senate Munitions Investigating Committee, from Miss Jeannette Rankin, first woman elected to Congress, who voted against our entry into the World War in 1917. The bonds carry coupons permitting the purchaser to participate in a referendum on five major propositions relative to world peace. The National Council seeks to organize American public opinion in support of a three-point platform of progressive world organization, worldwide reduction of armaments by international agreement and worldwide education for peace.

The American Committee on the Ethiopian Crisis, which is attempting to mobilize public opinion in this country to make an effective protest against hostilities in Africa, is seeking funds with which to continue its work. A letter from Emory Ross, executive secretary of the Committee, lists some of the peace, missionary, religious and welfare bodies that are coöperating in the Committee's work, and asks that contributions be sent to the Committee at 8 West Fortieth Street, New York City.

Mrs. Annie Nathan Meyer, of New York City, upholds the position of the Actor's Equity Association in asking double pay for Sunday performances (recently legalized in New York State) and also asking that actors be paid for rehearsals. Mrs. Meyer believes that with our present social customs, the proposed Monday holiday for actors would be no real substitute for the Sunday holiday observed generally by the rest of the country; and that a requirement of pay for actors during rehearsal periods would result in more careful advance preparations and less inefficiency on the part of producers and directors at rehearsals.

Haakon M. Chevalier, writing from Berkeley, California, asks that persons interested in academic freedom come to the aid of Victor Jewett, who was dismissed from his place as teacher of Social Studies at the junior high school in Eureka, California, presumably because of his liberal principles and activity in the labor movement. The Board of Trustees charged Jewett with "unprofessional conduct" but so far has failed to present any evidence either of misconduct or incompetence. Jewett is a member of the American Federation of Teachers and the Eureka Federated Trades and Labor Council, both affiliates of the A.F. of L., and he has actively allied himself with the labor movement. His dismissal followed closely upon the recent lumber strike in Eureka. Interested persons are urged to send contributions to the Teachers' Union Defense Committee, P. O. Box 541, Oakland, California.

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Poet's Pilgrimage

Eugene O'Neill: A Poet's Quest, by Richard Dana Skinner. New York: Longmans, Green and Company. 256 pages. $2.

WHEN I met Eugene O'Neill, some fifteen years ago, I saw at once a vivid and shy gentleness; though the emotions could be strong, the inward mood black, and the nervous arousal violent. In the course of these years since I first began to know him I have seen him in varying circumstances, some of them deeply personal, some enraging, or difficult, as only the theatre can be. But the sense I most felt then and have felt since was almost wholly inner. If the word were not so befouled, I would describe this quality as pure, free of elements outside its own needs. There was also something about him that made you want, reasonably or unreasonably, to defend him.

It was at this time that I began to hear of Eugene O'Neill as "Poor Gene." He was not poor, he had cars, two houses and so forth, not to speak of an inheritance, he drank only occasionally, his theatre fame was growing; but friends were bent on keeping him penniless, inebriate and unhappy. They also, however, had the protective impulse toward him. By this impulse, using their genuine admiration for his talent, their delight in his supposed wildness, his social revolt and his starvation, they spread a great aura of defensive pathos around his name. Pleasuring themselves in his strong moods and his fierce borderings on a rash life, they felt in general only a small part of his moral and poetic continuity. They consciously and unconsciously created a half-false, half-true legend about him of great publicity value in the theatre. As always, every legend has its price and its reward.

Steadily, meanwhile, the idea grew that Mr. O'Neill was a dramatist of social revolution, a bold new thinker and what not. This enlisted a further support of him and a still wider defense of him, none of which lessened the theatrical spread of his name. I think that even then there were a good many who knew that his most intense qualities and appeal and effect on us did not arise from any subject matter, any supposed revolutionary impact, any strong dramatic expertness. They knew that what moved us was the cost to the dramatist of what he handled. They knew that by his capacity for concern, his quivering nerves and passionate involvement, far more than by any dramatic process, he was touching their inmost hearts; and that, whatever the dramatic motive, the real appeal of his play was poetic and personal. To speak of Eugene O'Neill as a realist was once, no doubt, useful to him—realism being the reigning jabber and confusion of that particular moment. But much of his so-called realism was only a lyric use of realistic brutal detail, present most of all in words and phrases. To think, for example, of "The Hairy Ape" as a realistic sociological workingman's problem play is absurd. It is a surface shape of verisimilitude and of vernacular dirt in the eyes; but that is essentially surface reality. It offers us the most complete and magnificent fable in the modern theatre. This implies all the narrative abstraction and final pattern of fable, which here is so fine that to outline it is but to deceive your hearer into thinking the actual play is much better than proves to be really the case.

It is Mr. Skinner's perception, closely felt, and his intention, clearly based on a point of view of his own, that make his book so different from any O'Neill interpretation that has been written. Its approach is unique, just as its base is founded on religious and literary culture. He knows that the O'Neill plays—now arrived at the number of thirty-four, long and short—are not dramas discussing the social issues of the day each belongs to. He says brilliantly that these plays are neither social sermons nor contemporary satires; they are more like parables.

Eugene O'Neill has used neither situation nor individual to express the problem of masses or of a social system. His characters are not, like Ibsen's very often and especially Shaw's, almost passive victims of inheritance or of a convention or of a mass point of view. With O'Neill the problem of the individual, a soul in exercise or torment, has been the central interest; and it has often, in one character after another, been poignantly realized within the dramatist himself. The individual as *representing* the mass counts not so much as the individual *in revolt against* or *surrender to* the mass. From this very fact, partly, comes that frequent impression that the O'Neill plays have less of intellect and theory and more of dramatic instinct and personal upheaval.

Whatever may have been said of the morality and immorality of O'Neill's plays, the important issue is not the morality but the moral, since in the moral we find the key to the author's own feelings toward the character and situation involved. This concern of O'Neill's with evil and good is what combines with his drama's necessary American roots to give it an appeal so much wider than America. This is one of the main causes of his vogue in divers foreign countries. And for this reason the quality of the moral in his individual plays as they arrive is the measure of his intense growth as a poet.

The illumination of Mr. Skinner's book consists, then, in his conception of it as the record of a poet's pilgrimage. On this basis he was able to omit from this work most of the dramaturgic and stylistic criticism of the O'Neill plays. Mr. Skinner hits, furthermore, on the happy figure of the saint. The saints are a body of holy men whose life-pattern we have numberless opportunities to observe. This idea not only provides a happy model for parallels; it lets Mr. Skinner out from implications of vast philosophy, acumen and power of thought in the dramatist. It enables him, at the same time, to say that this dramatist is neither prophet nor saint. Eugene O'Neill's characters often tell us that he has not seldom, even as a poet, been deeply confused; many of his darkest doubts and many of his most tragic defeats have sprung from immature emotions and shortcomings in reasoning powers. Mr. Skinner can, thus, also tell us that we should accept O'Neill less as a leader and rather as a companion on our pilgrimage, but as a companion whose poetic insight is deep, whose consciousness of our moral problem is vibrant, whose experience of the soul's conflict is sharper through intuition than most men's, and whose willingness to seek a path even in the darkest shadows marks an extraordinary tenacity and the quality of a high romance.

STARK YOUNG.

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BOOKS IN REVIEW

Men of Good Intentions

THE NEW volume of "Men of Good Will"[1] does not convince me that Romains is writing a great novel, but still it is much better than the three volumes that came before it. There are not so many isolated characters or disconnected episodes, and comparatively few of those warehouse inventories of furniture that M. Romains has somehow managed to confuse with descriptive prose. There is also a new translator, Gerard Hopkins, who vastly excels his predecessor in ease and accuracy. Best of all, the story moves ahead, it carries along the reader, and most of it bears an intelligible relation to the general theme of a book that promises to be almost as long as the Fourteenth Britannica.

Robert Cantwell, in his New Republic review of the second volume, was the first critic to explain the nature of that theme. Briefly, it is the coming of the World War and the futility of the efforts made to prevent it. So far, M. Romains has scarcely mentioned the war-makers, even though they were particularly active in Paris during the period of his novel. He has said nothing about the Russian loans and how they were unloaded on the French peasants, nothing about the war scares engineered by French and German munitions makers in friendly alliance, nothing about the agitation for three years of compulsory military service as conducted by newspapers that were bribed by the Tsar's Foreign Office. On the other hand, he has a great deal to say about "the tragic failure . . . of those very movements which ought, by virtue of their nature and their intentions, to have fought against disaster and kept it at bay." Instead of attacking the war-makers for being strong and sly, he attacks the peace-makers for being weak. He is bent on recording the impotence of "Parliamentary Socialism, Revolutionary Syndicalism, Freemasonry, the Catholic Church and the various other churches."

This fourth volume of his novel, which includes Books 7 and 8 of the French text, is concerned with two of these churches or institutions. In Book 7, "The Lonely," Jerphanion wonders whether he should join the Masons. One of their leaders explains to him that the ultimate purpose of Masonry—that is, of European Masonry, which has broken its connection with the Anglo-American lodges—"is no less than the complete unity of mankind . . . complete in every sense and in every direction, even the purely mystical." Jerphanion is deeply impressed. But when he asks, "Suppose a European war breaks out in two or three years?" the Mason smiles and answers, "Well, what of it?" Jerphanion goes away baffled and unhappy. Book 8, "Provincial Interlude," studies the weaker side of the Catholic Church. There is a scandal in a provincial town, caused by a bishop who gets himself involved in a stock-jobber's swindle, and Abbé Mionnet is sent to pacify the victims. The Abbé is one of those clear-headed men-on-the-make whose intrigues M. Romains delights in describing. But apparently the notion he wants to imply in this episode is that the Catholic Church is too much concerned with its internal rivalries and too deeply involved in financial matters; it can no longer intervene to keep the world at peace.

He has already developed his objections to Marxian Socialism. "It is criminal," says one of the characters. "Its self-appointed task is to brutalize the masses, to drug them for the shambles." By talking about historical necessity, it destroys the cult of leadership. By placing its emphasis on the need for a future society, it distracts attention from the immediate danger. And now, "with the prospect of a world war in two or three years . . . everything else, your grand transformation of society, becomes a pleasant little pastime. It's as though a man condemned to death should consult a doctor about his liver."

How can this war be prevented, how could it have been prevented in 1910? M. Romains offers a solution through one of his favorite characters, the radical school teacher, Laulerque. There should be a secret society of determined and faithful men who know "how an act of free will can be forced like a tool between the joints of a resistant material." Societies like this, which have flourished since the eighteenth century, hold in themselves "the clue of history." A new one must be formed—but no, it has been formed already, and Laulerque is suddenly and gratifyingly asked to join it. His sponsor explains some of its principles. "Orders are given silently and executed without discussion. . . . Another of our rules is to enlist our members, as far as possible, from people whose appearance and social standing give no rise to suspicion"—in other words, chiefly from the white-collar class. "We should be fools to look for followers among professional agitators and social outcasts"—in other words, among the proletariat. As for the purpose of this society, Laulerque confides to Jerphanion that it aims "to prevent war by the use of the direct and secret means which I have already spoken of"—in other words, by blackmail, assassination, terrorism.

Now, I submit that this is a featherbrained method for preserving the peace of the world. It is of course true that secret societies have played an important role in modern history: M. Romains mentions the Masons in the French Revolution, but he could have added the Carbonari, the Society of the Seasons, even the Bolshevik Party in Tsarist Russia. But the reason for their importance was that they were allied with the masses, so that the force of every blow they struck was increased a hundredfold. A secret political society divorced from the masses is likely to become either impotent or vicious. M. Romains might remember that the Serbian Black Hand Society, composed of students and officers, assassinated Franz Ferdinand of Austria and thereby provoked the very war that his own men of good intentions were conspiring to stop. He might also remember the example of the French Anarchists, who formed secret groups that were known to the police, and yet were tolerated on the ground that their crimes resulted in the passage of laws against the working class. The secret Military Organization of the Social Revolutionary Party, in Russia, had a police spy at the head of it. Once there was question of disbanding the Military Organization and encouraging mass action. Strangely, the arguments against mass action and in favor of secret terrorism were almost exactly the same as those presented in "Men of Good Will." In this case, however, they were made by Azeff, the famous *agent provocateur*.

[1] The World from Below, by Jules Romains (Men of Good Will, Vol. IV). Translated by Gerard Hopkins. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. $2.50.

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About the literary qualities of this fourth volume, there is not much to say. They rise to no extraordinary height, yet they improve almost in proportion as the political argument becomes more sinister—a rare phenomenon in novels. For the rest, I ought to mention that M. Romains has written a pamphlet, "A Letter to My American Readers," most of which is concerned with answering the unfavorable reviews that his first three volumes received in The New Republic. He has some mean things to say about Robert Cantwell and me. But he decides to forgive us in the end, asserting that we are obviously "chock full of admiration for my novel, which only prejudice and temporary considerations have turned to hatred."—It is always a safe principle, when your arguments are weak, to attack the motives of your opponents, and especially to say that they are only jealous. MALCOLM COWLEY.

The Shackles on the Press

Freedom of the Press, by George Seldes. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company. 380 pages. $2.75.

THERE are several things wrong with daily journalism, one of which is that it presents a falsified picture of the world about us. This falsification results primarily from three kinds of censorship: governmental restrictions, distortion by publishers, advertisers and editors, and audience censorship, which means catering to the prejudices of the subscriber who will stop reading you if you don't. It is with the first two of these three censorships that Mr. George Seldes is concerned in this book; and the subject is obviously one that deserves discussion, in a world where two-thirds of the total population, about 1,400,000,000 persons, live under absolute, rigid control, 400,000,000 more have newspapers that can rarely be trusted, and only 225,000,000 or so have the degree of freedom of the press that exists today in the United States—such as it is.

Mr. Seldes, who used to be a foreign correspondent and a good one, is indefatigable in collecting facts. His book is the best thing of its kind since Upton Sinclair's "The Brass Check," and he has a great advantage over Mr. Sinclair in that he is a practising newspaperman who does not confuse failure through human and mechanical limitations with malevolent intent. For a long time to come, nobody will be able to talk or write intelligently on this subject without using Mr. Seldes' book as a springboard.

Without exactly meaning to do so, the author has penned the strongest tribute to the usefulness of what are called "the liberal weeklies" ever written. In case after case, he writes of a situation that had been suppressed, or most inadequately reported, by the dailies. Then, he says, the facts were set forth in The Nation or The New Republic or both of them and, thereafter, were a matter of public record. There are numerous long passages in the book that this reviewer did not need to read carefully, because he had written or edited the material the author quotes.

Mr. Seldes finds, as all sorts of students of the subject have always known, that the American press as a whole plays the game of capitalism. He recognizes the fact that our press is more free than that of any other country and also that even our present degree of freedom is now diminishing. He gives comprehensive treatment to the role of the press in the Harding oil scandals, the efforts at bribery by the electric-power industry, the influence of patent-medicine advertisers, and the prosperity ballyhoo of 1929 and thereafter. There are separate chapters on The New York Times, Hearst, the Associated Press, the English-language newspapers of Paris and the control of international news. He is a warm advocate of the Newspaper Guild, which he believes will raise the standards among working journalists even against the indifference or hostility of owners. He dutifully sets forth many panaceas for journalistic corruption, proposed by various people, in none of which does he put much faith. Chapter nineteen is "A Roll of Honor," at the head of which he puts The Manchester Guardian and the pre-Hitler Frankfurter Zeitung. Both these papers, he believes, achieved greatness because they were controlled by their editors and these editors happened to be men who cared profoundly for truth. He believes that public criticism sometimes makes papers better, and instances the reformation of the Russian news in The New York Times, which he attributes—correctly I think—to the review of that news by Charles Merz and Walter Lippmann, published in The New Republic.

Every experienced newspaper man knows that 99 percent of the charges Mr. Seldes makes against American journalism in this book are true. Most journalists could furnish more material of the same sort. The question of allotting responsibility for these conditions is largely one of proportion and emphasis. He might well, it seems to me, have said something more about audience censorship, and the unconscious inhibitions the writer and editor lay upon themselves in order to "keep out of trouble," to "play along with the boss" and with other influential people. He might also have laid more emphasis than he does upon the fact that our sick journalism is a part of a sick society, that the inward stresses of decaying capitalism prevent a free and honest press as they prevent free and honest schools or churches. Philosophy, however, is one thing and facts are another. Mr. Seldes' book is an ammunition dump which (though its value would have been greatly heightened by the addition of an index) is the most useful resource now available for those concerned to see just how badly journalism does its job. BRUCE BLIVEN.

The Impossible Harry Lehr

"King Lehr" and the Gilded Age, by Elizabeth Drexel Lehr. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company. 332 pages. $3.

THIS BOOK so far has been received with hilarity: the picture of the descendants of fur trappers, iron puddlers and Colorado desert rats turning into kings, leaders of society; the story of their incredible extravagances, eating diamondback terrapin and drinking nothing but champagne every day, $200,000 to a single party; the recital of the awkwardnesses of some of them and the proud triumph of others when European royalty even glanced in their direction and European aristocracy in exchange for board was willing to bed with them; of how their itineraries were so fixed to the Eastern centers that when by a miracle they ventured into the very West they were draining it was like a trip into darkest Africa—all so wasteful, useless and conspicuous, uncivilized and vulgar, and yet the book so naïvely proud of the empty magnificences it recounts—all this was greeted by howls from critics who had read Marcel Proust and memoirs of suave court life and had of course been educated to the civilized wastefulness of European nobility.

What would a *grand seigneur* like, let us say, Baron de Charlus think of a Harry Lehr, former wine salesman, former sandwich man for clothing and accessory stores who,

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congenitally unwilling to enjoy his wife, appropriated the one essential to American social success, her money, and then made himself arbiter of American elegances simply by laughing? What would that dark and brooding lord, Charlus, think of a man who never did anything but laugh, cut capers, dress himself in the girls' clothes he loved so much to wear, posture and mince, evoking gales of merriment from the mighty ladies of New York and even a chuckle from their husbands, relaxed a moment from their labors of stealing the Mesaba Range? The great partition of America was taking place; oil, iron and wheat, transmuted into gold, were creating of Newport and Fifth-Avenue New York fairy cities. But surely Baron de Charlus, as Proust wrote of him, would not have been amused; surely this feudal lord would have despised the bourgeois money standards, the ostentation of all this awful spending, would have ignored the impossible (by all civilized standards) Harry Lehr and all his vulgar cohorts.

Yet the suggestion is here made that he didn't. That at least unconsciously Elizabeth Drexel Lehr is a better social historian than was Marcel Proust; that for all the hauteur of a noble soul, that for all the disdain for sordid gold Proust imputes to Charlus, especially in the earlier volumes when the baron is painted in a worldly scene, Charlus would have liked Harry Lehr and his naïve lady very much and would have been proud to have been seen with them. That in fact he was. Because the one man that Proust respected and feared and hated so much that in attempting to understand him he created one of the great characters of literature, the Baron de Charlus, was Count Robert de Montesquiou; and because this same count, although he despised and often snubbed Marcel Proust, was an intimate friend of the Harry Lehrs.

NATHAN ASCH.

A Radical, But—

The Neurotic Nightingale, by Vardis Fisher. Milwaukee: The Casanova Press. 71 pages. $3.

TO THOSE in search of a sour song the four essays of "The Neurotic Nightingale" may be commended. The author writes intently, even brilliantly—and he is rich in things to complain about, for he is very hard to please. "When I discovered," he says, "that sexual frustration and a sense of guilt had made a Socialist of me I repudiated socialism"—which could be all right if only corresponding discoveries and repudiations had been made by our radical business men. But the absence of matching somewhat fortifies the enemy, while Mr. Fisher proceeds to carve up his natural allies. He is in the "I am a radical, but—" school of pamphleteering, wherein the line of battle wavers until one becomes dizzy; he is as likely as not to throw comradely arms around Mr. Wiggin for a few paragraphs, or to find as his spiritual colleagues under certain circumstances "such men as voted for Mr. Hoover three years ago."

He seems quite eager to assert that much vanity, greed, idiocy, hypocrisy, arrested development, superstition, vindictiveness, pruriency and cowardice mark mankind—yet he is more likely to be hurt when noting these traits in radicals, while tending to condone them as normal and human in reactionaries. The book is provocative; and if one knows how to discount an author, it can even be profitable. But at present Mr. Fisher threatens to be too good for this world.

KENNETH BURKE.

Toward a Better Death

We Too Are Drifting, by Gale Wilhelm. New York: Random House. $2.

Pier 17, by Walter Havighurst. New York: The Macmillan Company. $2.

IT MAY be a little unfair to review these two novels together, since they are related only by the fact that they are first novels and that they are laid on the Pacific Coast, which seems to be experiencing the sort of literary wave that swept over the South a few years ago. But together they make a beautiful demonstration of two aspects of contemporary fiction, with Miss Wilhelm's "We Too Are Drifting" representing what may be called elegant decay, and Mr. Havighurst's "Pier 17" representing crude strength, set side by side like figures in an old-fashioned temperance cartoon. Miss Wilhelm's novel deals with the bareheaded hazards encountered by three San Francisco Lesbians in their search for the avenues of enchantment; Mr. Havighurst's novel deals, in a somewhat less grim and urgent fashion, with a shipping strike in Seattle. The tragedy of Miss Wilhelm's novel is that lovers must separate, especially when one of the lovers is to marry somebody else; the tragedy of Mr. Havighurst's novel is that, during strikes, people frequently get killed. In scope, breadth of conception, moral earnestness and political acumen, Mr. Havighurst's work is unquestionably superior; but Miss Wilhelm's novel, which will reach a much wider audience, is just as unquestionably more daring.

It is daring in a rather exceptional fashion. Miss Wilhelm does not argue, explain or expostulate about the ways of her Californians; her story is merely the usual triangle, except that all the points of the triangle happen to be women. Nor is she an advocate of what Lenin called the glass-of-water theory of barren sexual play. Her characters are earnest, almost forbiddingly so, and, before they have done with one another, have developed such granite fidelities that a mere attempt to tempt one member of the trio—though the attempt is ludicrously futile—very nearly results in the death of the temptress. King Arthur's court could scarcely boast such faithfulness. The shock in "We Too Are Drifting" lies in its complete acceptance of the essential perversion of the characters. Such doubts and revulsions and fears of scandal as might once have disturbed them are apparently remote; they live in a world that is tolerant or ignorant or unconcerned, and they scarcely give that world a thought.

As a revelation of the way Lesbians regard their own affairs, the book is of some interest, and its prose gives evidence of having been labored over. But in denying her characters any vital commerce with that vague, conflicting, contradictory, suspicious and powerful repository of instinct and prejudice that is known as the normal world, Miss Wilhelm has robbed her book of the only kind of conflict that could give it life. The reason for her choice has to be inferred from occasional references within the novel, and from outside knowledge of how panic-stricken, uncomprehending and distraught members of the Russian Hill bohemians actually were before and during and after the San Francisco general strike. It would seem that Miss Wilhelm has arbitrarily limited the area of her characters' environment, not because the areas beyond it are peopled with the sexually hostile, but because to admit it even in part would compel the admission of social issues that would diminish the stature of the characters and render their absorption in their own affairs a little ridiculous. Instead of heart-

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shaking emotional upheavals we should see girlish disputes raging in shrill intensity indoors, while outside trucks were being overturned, a number of men were being killed, and the fresh winds blowing off the Golden Gate were carrying the scent of tear gas and vomit gas out to sea.

One note of conscious or unconscious humor appears in the novel. As little Virginia starts bravely down the path of grim delight she is described as carrying a particular book, the work of that eminent moralist Kenneth Burke, incongruously titled "Toward a Better Life."

The relevant point about "Pier 17" is that it describes just such chaotic violence as San Francisco has experienced and from which such characters as those Miss Wilhelm writes about have withdrawn. This is, to be sure, almost its only distinction, although the pictures of Seattle's hills and lakes have a homesick attractiveness. The episodic story deals with Adrian Scarf, a poetic and sensitive boy, who is injured at sea before a strike breaks out, and who emerges from the hospital in time to take part in some particularly violent picketing, to raid a scab tugboat, foolishly betray his comrades and watch the defeat of the union.

The general impression conveyed is that the strikers are the aggressors, gifted with a sudden incomprehensible strength and ferocity as they tip over trucks, kill scabs and a ship captain, and repulse a police force that some magic seems to have rendered temporarily witless and blind. As an account of the seamen's strike, either in Seattle or in San Francisco, the novel is partial and without depth. But it does give a superficial impression of the violence, the confusion, the horror, that the members of the West Coast's middle and upper classes saw when they looked toward the piers. And as such it helps to explain why Miss Wilhelm's characters stared so fixedly into one another's eyes, why they refused so obstinately to face the world crashing and collapsing around them as they headed toward their own concept of a better life. ROBERT CANTWELL.

Theatre Design

Architecture for the New Theatre, edited by Edith J. R. Isaacs. New York: Theatre Arts, Inc., for the National Theatre Conference. 125 pages, illustrated. $2.50.

IF, AS many authorities prophesy, the great development of theatre activity in the future lies not on Broadway but in the community, "local," "little" or school theatre, then this small book is very important. "The requirements of these new producers," Mr. Simonson points out in his article, "are in every way exactly the opposite of the commercial theatres and the architect must realize this clearly enough to plan for them." In her foreword, Mrs. Isaacs gives some idea of deficiencies in the present understanding of the problem: "There is probably no form of building or architectural design about which so little has been written—especially in English—as about theatre architecture; and most of what has been written was out of date almost before it appeared in print."

This may be sufficient reason for the brevity of this compilation of articles by several authorities. Mr. Lee Simonson contributes a short, authoritative article on such fundamentals as sight lines, proportions and arrangement of parts of the building through the medium of line drawings. Mr. Pawley has selected a number of theatre types, gives a critical survey, working drawings and a tabulation of dimensions and costs that should serve as valuable reference material to any architect. Mr. Lescaze's approach to functional details through the medium of hypothetical letters to a client (both architect and client being a little vague) is important because of the architect's reputation as a modern designer. Norman Bel Geddes' two projects, the Circus Type and the Mass Theatre, designed for the Soviet State Theatre at Kharkov in the Ukraine, are stimulating approaches to the problem even though they may not seem practical to us.

The scarcity of examples and the lack of a summary establishing definite principles to serve as a basis for design (if such a thing is possible) definitely place the book as a non-technical brief of a very complex problem. It is an able, profusely illustrated and interesting introduction to such specialized aspects of theatre design as the inexperienced architect and client can hardly be expected to evaluate under any conditions. It aims to put a stop to the mistakes of the past by indicating modern examples of good practice. Furthermore it suggests, to quote again from Mr. Simonson:

> If one of the major opportunities of American [theatre] architecture at present is not to be bungled at the start, there is urgent need for a clearing house of theatre experts in all fields which would act as a consulting and a distributing center for all special and technical information needed in theatre building and which could be consulted when a new theatre was being planned.

S. R. MCCANDLESS.

"We" Fly East

North to the Orient, by Anne Morrow Lindbergh. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company. 255 pages. $2.50.

ONE BY one—or is it sixteen abreast?—the reviewers of Anne Morrow Lindbergh's "North to the Orient" pay their respects to the woman who can both fly so dauntlessly and write so sensitively. The story she tells is that of air voyaging with her husband in the summer of 1931, by the Great Circle Route, to the Far East. The exploit began at College Point, Long Island, on July 27, and ended abruptly in late September, not according to Hoyle, when the plane turned over as it was being lowered from the British carrier "Hermes" in the Yangtze River. Her narrative covers not only radio operation and routes but such exotic experiences as being the first white woman to appear in some backwash of civilization, and encounters with variegated human beings ranging from Eskimos in Alaska, sailors, fishermen and a stowaway, to the people of ancient cities. There is a fog reaching several thousand feet upward from the sea with which to battle, and the buckling on of peculiar armor for the contest while cold fear creeps into the very bones. There is a vast flood over the land with desperately hungry people milling around the queer craft as its pontoons rest on the water. They are looking for food. One must escape, even though one is trying to serve on a relief commission:

> My husband pressed the starter. The engine caught —an answering roar. They [the husband, a Chinese doctor and an American doctor] took off dead ahead, over flooded fields, between fences, collapsed roofs and grave mounds, regardless of wind direction—anything to get off, to shake that trailing wake of sampans, those arms paddling as fast as they could in a vain attempt to follow.

In part the story is a fairy tale of quaint happenings, feasts, magic and honors. In part it is a tale of horror, woe and misery unredeemed.

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Why does Anne Morrow Lindbergh report her exploit in story form? In a preface she raises the question herself and also answers it, thus deeming it important, obviously. She belongs, she says, to the "people who like to recount their adventures, the diary keepers, the story tellers, the letter writers, a strange race of people who feel cheated of an experience unless it is told. It does not really exist until it is put into words." How vividly this adventure exists when it is put into words is indicated by the thousands of readers who are making "North to the Orient" a best seller.

With such a tale, such a preface and such an audience, is it captious, merely, to suggest that a fuller diet is in order? An epilogue for dessert? Since the husband in the case has been proclaimed presidential timber as a result of heroism in the air, what place in the stream of general ideas and interests does this story of husband-and-wife heroism hold? If, as Amelia Earheart now declares that she has been doing, Anne Lindbergh is also pointing a mark for women to shoot at, what in fact is the mark?

Air voyaging differs from all earlier voyaging in its social connotations. If it shortens distance, what happens to the populations thus drawn together? If a friendly visitor may now and then drop from the skies as the first visible white woman, the eyes of the world's troubled peoples turn with growing anxiety to the skies from which descend devastating objects upon peoples linked by the air. Is the mark then feminism—equal right to dare and do? Is it "color, glamor, curiosity, magic or mystery"? Is it trade? Is it speed? Or is it war? If Victoria could return to earth from her slower time and bring back Tennyson with her, what kind of idylls would he compose for a swift age rushing to storm cellars and grappling with its gas masks? The airplane seems to have the world by the throat. Would that be the proper substance of an epilogue?

MARY R. BEARD.

Books in Brief

Schoolhouse in the Foothills, by Ella Enslow in collaboration with Alvin F. Harlow. New York: Simon and Schuster. 239 pages. $2.

NO ONE who has not lived in the mountains," write the authors, "can have any conception of the poverty, the almost total deprivation of all that most Americans consider essential to existence"—*i.e.*, the condition prevailing in the region where Miss Enslow was "teacher, attorney, financier, nurse . . . and preacher to the community." But the least imaginative reader should have some conception of it after finishing this chronicle of Shady Cove, in the foothills of Tennessee. Life among the unemployed miners fighting for existence on barren hillside patches, after five years of depression and two of drought, meant half-starved children coming to school, or staying away because they hadn't clothes or shoes to come in. And this happened after the energy and resource of the young teacher had built up the school attendance in her district to the unprecedented number of 158 students, ranging in age from five to sixty-four, and requiring three teachers. In Shady Cove this poverty is a thing of the past, because a federal power project is transforming the site into a lake, but in hundreds of similar mountain communities the conditions described here still obtain—"proof that the forgotten man of the Southern mountains has not yet been quite recalled to mind."

M. G.

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The Klondike Nugget, by Russell A. Bankson. Caldwell, Idaho: The Caxton Printers. 349 pages. $2.50.

An appetite for news is one of the distinguishing characteristics of modern man, and so Gene Allen obtained more wealth and influence by publishing The Klondike Nugget at Dawson City in the first gold rush than he could have done by mining. His paper became so influential that he was able to force the discharge of Thomas Fawcett, the first Canadian gold commissioner, and the recall of James Church McCook, the first American consul. Russell A. Bankson helped Mr. Allen to prepare this story of journalism on the next-to-last frontier. J. G.

The Wind Blew West, by Edwin Lanham. New York: Longmans, Green and Company. $2.50.

This first novel describes the coming of a railroad to the town of Rutherford, Texas, in the seventies and eighties. Led by the windy Colonel Sóward, a clique of business men issue an extravagant brochure on the possibilities of their "city." Men come: Coleman, a farmer fleeing Arkansas locusts and seeking New Canaan; Amon Hall, a young Tennessee lawyer of Presbyterian sharpness; Jacques Vidal, the French adventurer. The farmer suffers, the lawyer rises, the adventurer prospers, and the town grows. After three years Rutherford finally gets its railroad, but it is doomed when, shortly afterwards, the T & P builds farther west. Mr. Lanham shows the social forces at work, he has occasional moments of power (Coleman's locusts, his wife's misfortunes), and at least two of his characters are interesting (the lawyer and the Colonel). Even though the action is often melodramatic and loosely tied together, this is a better-than-average novel. J. M.

Contributors

JOHN DOS PASSOS, novelist and playwright, is the author, among other books, of "Three Soldiers," "Manhattan Transfer," "The 42nd Parallel" and "1919." "In All Countries," a book of travel, and "Three Plays" were published last year by Harcourt, Brace.

JOHN STRACHEY is the author of "The Coming Struggle for Power" and "The Nature of Capitalist Crisis." During his lecture tour of America last winter, the immigration authorities made a much publicized but ultimately unsuccessful attempt to deport him.

LUDWIG LORE, who for fifteen years was editor-in-chief of The New Yorker Volkszeitung, is a German-American journalist and student of international problems.

LESLIE READE is a British barrister and playwright who was born and brought up in South Africa. His play "The Shattered Lamp" was produced in New York last season and he has recently finished a play about imperialism in Africa, entitled "White Man's Burden."

HAROLD WARD, whose special field is the physical and social sciences, has contributed to numerous magazines.

NATHAN ASCH is a New York novelist whose latest book, "The Valley," has just been published by Macmillan.

KENNETH BURKE's most recent book was "Permanence and Change," which was published in The New Republic Dollar Series.

ROBERT CANTWELL is the author of two novels, "Laugh and Lie Down" and "The Land of Plenty."

S. R. MCCANDLESS is a professor of Lighting at the Yale University Theatre, and the author of "A Method of Lighting the Stage."

MARY R. BEARD has collaborated with her husband, Charles A. Beard, on notable books of history and has written or edited several books of her own, including "America Through Women's Eyes" and "Laughing Their Way."

The initials signed to the brief reviews are those of Martha Gruening, Joe Gould and Jerome Melquist.

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